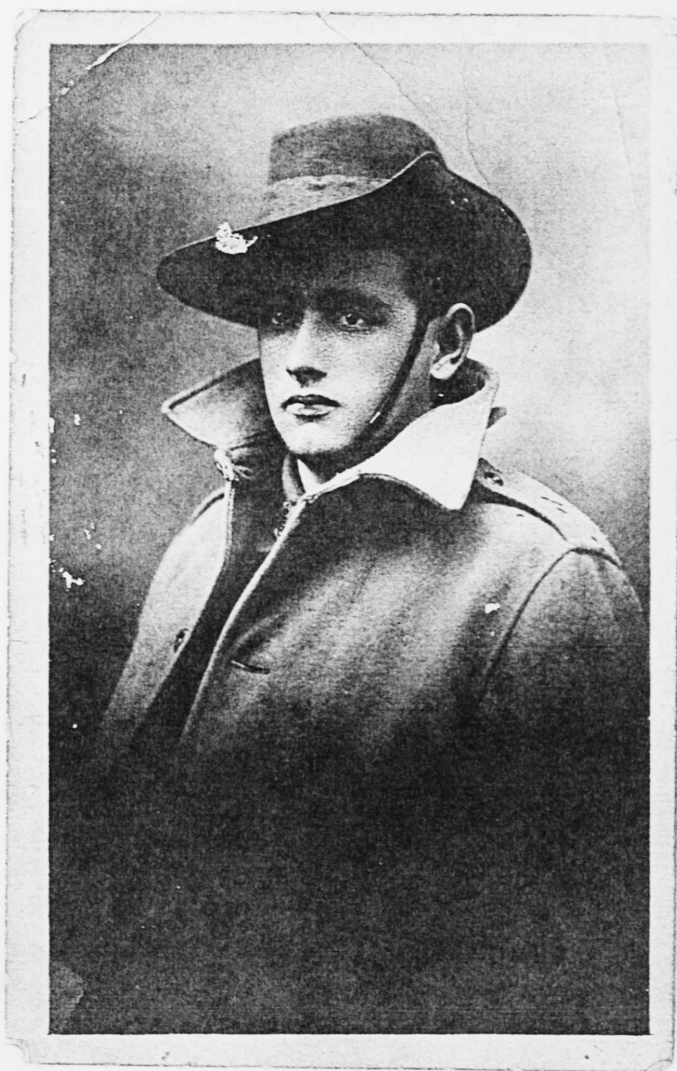


DIARIES OF GRAVES DETACHMENT DIGGER

WILLIAM FRAMPTON McBEATH

IN THE YEARS 1918 - 1919  
OF WORLD WAR ONE



PTE. W. F. McBEATH 61661  
58th BATTALION  
12th REINFORCEMENTS  
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

THIS BOOK WAS COMPILED FOR THE RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF  
THE LATE WILLIAM FRAMPTON McBEATH

**SOURCES**

AUSTRALIAN PORTABLE DIARY 1918

THE AUSTRALIAN COMFORT'S FUND GIFT DIARY 1919

ORIGINAL DINNER MENU

PHOTOGRAPHS AND NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

ORIGINAL LETTERS FROM WILL TO HIS  
MOTHER, FATHER AND BROTHER

**TYPED, PRINTED AND BOUND BY HIS DAUGHTER, 1994**

NORMA E. HARRISON  
3 GINA COURT, SHEPPARTON  
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, 3630  
TELEPHONE 058-217899

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## PROLOGUE

William Frampton McBeath was born on 20th April, 1899 at 200 Wood Street, Preston, Victoria. The third son of Annie Eliza (nee Frampton) and William Charles McBeath. His elder brother Don was some nine years his senior and his brother Allan died in early childhood.

William, or Will as he was known, received his schooling at Tyler Street, Preston, State School No. 1494. As a youth he was taught violin, was in the Army Cadets and was a regular church goer with his family, attending St. Mary's Church of England at the corner of Tyler Street and Plenty Road, Preston.

He enlisted in June, 1918 to serve his country and expand his horizons. He was in the 12th Reinforcements, Broadmeadows, 58th Battalion, Service No. 61661, Paybook No. 614078, Rifle No. 39239.

This record is compiled by his daughter Norma Harrison, from diaries, letters and memorabilia which has survived the seventy odd years.

In the past, we have read of the war heroes who fought and survived, and the many who perished during the devastating years of the Great War. To my knowledge, not many have heard of the young men who had the task in the Graves Detachment of digging up the bodies from the temporary graves of the battlefields and laying them to rest in the War Cemeteries.

I have read my father's diaries and letters many times throughout my life, and have always wanted to put it down for others to read as they are part of history. My father didn't talk about the dark side of his experiences but showed enthusiasm for the wonderful European buildings that he visited when he had leave and enough money to go to these places.

No corrections of spellings have been made, it is as he wrote it.





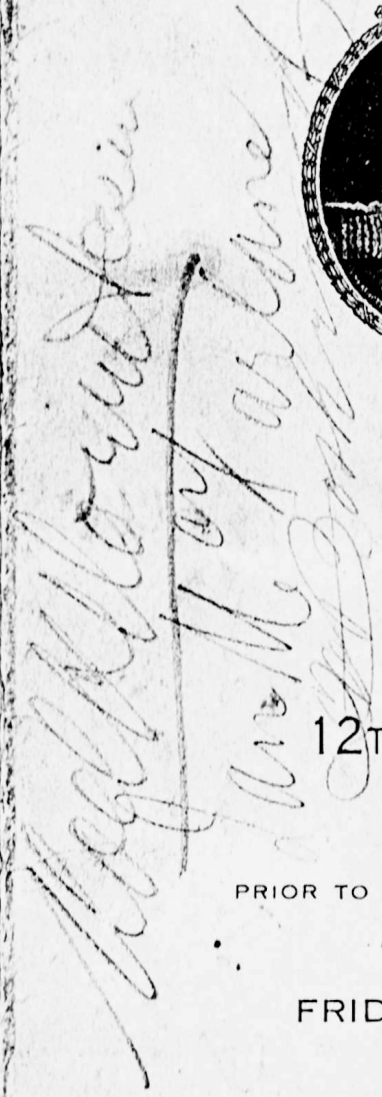
1899 - INFANT



1903/4 - TODDLER  
WILLIAM FRAMPTON McBEATH



1913 - SCHOOL CADET

[illegible]

12TH REINFORCEMENTS.  
BROADMEADOWS.  
PRIOR TO THEIR EMBARKATION FOR THE FRONT  
ON  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 23<sup>RD</sup> 1918.

COMMANDING OFFICERS:  
LIEUT. T. JENKINS  
" R. CORBETT

P. KINNINMONT.  
MANAGER

AUTOGRAPHS.

W. V. Beach  
R. Jenkins  
S. J. McQuinn  
O. H. C. H.  
J. R. Coyle

S. J. Smith

W. J. H.  
W. J. H.

J. C. L. Bae

R. Brown, Sgt.

Campbell James

Sgt. V. C. Whitten

A. Lennox

E. H. D. C.

C. H. Elder

J. J. H.  
R. J. H.

C. H. Elder

W. J. H.

Diner.

Oysters, Mornay

Consomme Paysanne

Fried Whiting, Orly

Roast Lamb and Mint Sauce

Pommes Rissoles

Choux Fleurs, Poisonaise

Bindonnet a la Broche

Salade

Victoria Pudding

Glace au Cafe

Cafe

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE VOYAGE OVER - 31/8 TO 12/11/18

#### WEEK ONE - MELBOURNE TO FREEMANTLE

Saturday, 31 August, 1918

Left Port Melb. 12 n. Anchored in bay till 4 pm, struck duty first day on boat. Arrived Queenscliff 6.30 pm. Mail boat came alongside.

Sunday, 1 September

Past St. Vincits Gulf. Sea very rough, evry body sick.

Monday, 2 September

Had our first boat drill & physical jerks. One silly fool left port hole open & nearly drowned us at 2 am. Sea very rough, was sea sick. A boxing contest won by Jimmy Taylor.

Tuesday, 3 September

Ordinary boat drill.

Wednesday, 4 September

A boat alarm, all fell out with life belts & no boots at 3 am. 3 whales sighted. Comforts fund material issued. Sea fairly calm. Still in the Aust. Bight.

Thursday, 5 September

Passed another transport homeward bound. Stopped 3 hours to cool engines, first stop from Melb. Nearly through the Bight.

Friday, 6 September

Our duty day, I got cook's fatigue, peeling spuds & onions. Steered 90 miles out of our course. Rounded Cape Lewin. Engines gone out of order, stopped 3 hours. Concert on lower deck.

Saturday, 7 September

Ordinary boat drill. Sighted 3 sharks, 1 whale. Sea very rough round Cape. Several boxing contests.

Sunday, 8 September

Arrived Freemantle, 6 pm. Lights very pretty. First land from Port Melb.

#### WEEK TWO - ROUGH WEATHER

Monday, 9 September

Ancored at Freemaantle. No shore leave granted. Took on 780 tons of coal to last to Durban. Saw the "Tawala" that was torpedoed & sunk for 8 months. 4 other transports in harbour. On guard.

Tuesday, 10 September

Left Freemantle 6.30 am, all ships in harbour whistling. Saw a shoal of flying fish. Weather very rough and squally.

Wednesday, 11 September

Weather rough, waves breaking right over the bridge, evry thing batoned down.

Thursday, 12 September

Concert on lower deck & boxing. Match arranged between Bill Carrol, heavy weight champion of AIF & Monty Murton, champion of Aust. Navy to take place in Durban, time permitting.



Friday, 13 September  
Weather still rough.

Saturday, 14 September  
Weather rough, all our pudding washed overboard. Very good concert in the evening.

Sunday, 15 September  
Sea calmer, lovely sunny day. Service at 11 am & 3.30 pm.

**THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER WRITTEN HOME, UNDATED**

"Dear Mother,

I am starting to write this halfway from Fremantle to Durban so you will have to excuse it if it is a bit erratic as I will be putting things in at different times. Well to begin with we arrived at Fremantle about 6 pm on Saturday 8th. It was good to see all the lights after being a week on the water. We were all counting on leave but the next morning they read out that no leave would be granted. The boys nearly went mad, they all got in the coalers way & wouldn't let them work but that didn't work. The worst of it was I was picked for guard, it was no pleasant job with 1100 boys in a bad humor. There were 12 extra guard men on as there was a rumour going round that they were going to lower a raft & float it ashore, we were only anchored about 30 yds. from the pier. All the guard had ball ammunition, it wasn't a pleasant situation to be in. I didn't want to stop the boys, because I felt the same way about it as them, but if I didn't, it would mean clink for me. However the boys thought better of it when they heard of the ammunition & contented themselves with pelting a few spuds at us. There was a Chinese vessel alongside us & there was a regular battle with spuds. I think it was another victory for the AIF. We pulled out of Fremantle early on the Tuesday morning amidst great whistleing from all the boats & trains. Fremantle didn't look a bad place from the boat but you can't judge a place by its port. Well after we got under way a bit we had our last look at Aussie for a while. The weather was fairly rough the first two days, after that it calmed down a bit. Then we saw the whales I told you about in the other letter & the shooting. We saw a big school of porpoises today, there must have been a hundred or more, it was just like watching a steeplechase to see them jumping along. I have been getting a bit of history of the boat we are on. When war was declared it was in Port Melb., no that's wrong, it was coming to Aussie & didn't have a wireless on board so didn't know there was a war on, & as soon as she came in the heads she was seized & turned into a transport. She is one of four of Germany's latest cargo boats, they were built in Hamburg 1912. The Hobart she was called you can still see the name on the front of her & on a big wheel at the back is Hobart Hamburg 1912. This is her 10th trip with troops & has been fired at twice with torpedos, but there is an extra big convoy waiting for us at Siera Leone, there are two troop ships 4 days behind us, we will wait for them at Durban. We sighted land 9 o'clock on Sunday 20th & got to Durban about 2 pm. We marched up to the city & were dismissed. We have a church parade every Sunday morning conducted by the C of E Chaplain, the band plays the hymns & every body sings, it sounds alright. There is a concert every week, there are some very good artists here, not quite up to Opera style but

very good for a transport. There is a canteen on board where you can get anything from a needle to a cake of chocolate. We get the war news by wireless, it seems marvelous that we should hear from land thousands of miles away. You hardly realise these things until you are cut off from the outside world. How is Don getting on with his furniture. I suppose he has nearly finished his bedroom sweet. Does he still go in to college on Thursday nights & pictures Wednesdays. Tell him to remember me to Vera, Alma & Mrs. Roache & that I will write soon. How is Dad getting on with the chickens this year, I hope they came out well & that the fowls are laying well. Does he still go to choir practice on Tuesday nights? I suppose the church yard is looking quite shipshape by now, have they started a garden there yet, are there any more people going there now the weather is finer? How is the Progress Association getting on now that they have lost Mr. Williams? Who is President now. I suppose Dad is still treasurer & Mr. Thompson Secretary. Has the pepper tree I helped to cut down started to sprout yet, I suppose it will be a big shady tree when I get back. How is little Lilian Rofe keeping, she is a bonnie little kid. Remember me to Mrs. & Mr. Rofe & Mrs. Rangecroft, also Mrs. Tierney, tell her I will write soon. I wrote a letter to Auntie & Grandma & George Cockcroft & a few others. I have written my address in full below as it will be safer to address my letters like that. Well Mum I will say good bye for the present, with love to Dad, Don & yourself from your loving son, Will

No. 611661

Pte. McBeath  
12th Reinforcements  
General Service Group (Vic)  
Australian Imperial Forces  
Abroad

p.s. I don't think I told George to write it in full so will you tell him please. (Merry Xmas to all)"

### WEEK THREE - TARGET PRACTICE & CALM SEAS

Monday, 16 September

Weather very calm. Target shooting with ships 4 inch gun. Sent out 6 smoke screens & maneuvered about in them. Saw 3 whales within 80 yards of boat, all the officers firing at them with rifles. They were 20 ft. long.

Tuesday, 17 September

Weather still calm. Concert on lower deck. Nothing unusual occurred.

Wednesday, 18 September

Concert at night.

Thursday, 19 September

Fine & smooth. Boat drill for crew. Alarm sounded 3 pm.

Friday, 20 September

Fine weather. Lovely sunset.

Saturday, 21 September

Rifle shooting at boxes thrown over board. Concert at night.

Sunday, 22 September

Church parade 11 am. YMCA singsong 2 pm.

LETTER DATED 15/9/18

"Dear Auntie & Grandma,

A few lines to let you know I am still tossing about on the briney, we are having a very nice trip so far, the first few days I was a bit sea sick, but I have got over that long ago. Some of the poor chaps are still sick, they do look miserable. It is not such a bad life on board, but it gets rather monotonous, sometimes there is great excitement when the cups chase the dishes down the table or a mess orderly falls down the stairs with a dixie full of stew. The other morning the orderleys were washing up in a big tub, & the boat gave a lurch & started it to slide, by the time it reached the end of the table it had some speed up, in the end it broke the electric globe & emptied all the greasy water over one chap. On Sunday morning we have hard boiled eggs & bacon for breakfast, one dixie full upset down the stairs, & one humorous chap called out 'Look at the eggs on the hatch(way).' We get up at 6 am roll our hammocks by 6.40 then go on deck for a bit of fresh air & exercise before breakfast at 7.15 We have porridge, stew or lamb & potatoes & pudding & sometimes biscuits, oranges or nuts from our comforts fund. After breakfast we are free till 11 am, when we have physical jerks & games. At 12.30 we have dinner, always a three course meal. Of an afternoon we are fooling round passing time till tea time when we have a good meal at 5.30 pm. At night there is generally a concert or a boxing contest. There are some very good boxers on board. There is a match arranged between Bill Carrol heavy weight champion of the AIF & Monty Murton champion of the Australian Navy, to take place at our next port of call which I can't name. We sighted a whale & a couple of sharks the other day, & a shoal of flying fish, there are some lovely albatrosses following the boat, I don't know where they rest, because we are hundreds of miles from land. How is evrybody at Clunes? Is Grandma keeping well? I hope she is Auntie. Tell Grandma not to worry about me as I have plenty of clothes & plenty to eat. Remember me to the Nurses & Minnie Ada. Do they still do their stomich jerks? Does Minnie go out rabbiting often? I wish I was there to go with her. How is little Rex getting on, & remember me to Mrs & Mr Purcell & Phil & Lily. I must close now with fondest love to all from your affectionate grandson & nephew  
Will"

(Will's Aunt, Mrs. Ada Johnson was Matron of the Clunes Hospital.)

WEEK FOUR - FIRST SHORE LEAVE

Monday, 23 September

Saw some sharks & flying fish. Weather fine & calm. Alarm 2.30pm

Tuesday, 24 September

Concert at night. Alarm 10 am.

Wednesday, 25 September

YMCA singsong & lecture. Lecture by Colonel on behavior in ports of call.

Thursday, 26 September

On guard, weather rather rougher. Evrybody preparing for leave in Durban. Show Day in Melb.

Friday, 27 September

Weather calm again. A few whales seen. Evrybody had a gargle of condys fluid for sore throats.

Saturday, 28 September

Violent thunder storm at night, chaps sleeping on deck were drenched. Darkened ship no lights after dark.

Sunday, 29 September

African coast sighted 9 am. Went ashore 3 pm. First time since Melb.

#### LETTER TO HOME - UNDATED

"Dear Mother,

A few lines to let you know I am still tossing about at sea. At present we are 2000 miles from land. I am getting a bit sick of seeing nothing but water all day long, but I suppose I will get used to it. We have been having very good weather the last few days. We had our share of rough weather last week, I can tell you we were rolling about some. All the plates & cups were chasing one another up & down the table. You could hardly walk about on deck, & the waves were breaking right over the bridge. The first calm day we had they did some target shooting with the ships gun. They went to great trouble making a target, but the blessed thing sunk as soon as it was put overboard, so they tied some boxes together & fired at them. It did kick up a row when it went off, you could see the shell hit the water & send up a big spout, & come up again about 50 yds further on. They also sent out some smoke screens & were manuvering about in them. The same day two whales were sighted only about 50 yds away from the boat, they caused great excitement. The officers were firing at them with rifles. They followed the boat for quite a long time. Evry time they came up they spouted & left a big patch of oil behind. The biggest was fully 20 or 30 feet long. You would wonder what such monsters could live on in the sea. We have seen plenty of porpoises & a few sharks. I did my washing the other day with cold water but got them clean all right & I missed a parade to watch them in case someone took a fancy to it & the result was I got guard duty. I suppose it was my own fault. The food is still very good, by jove they know how to make stew here, sometimes we get rabbits for dinner & Sunday mornings we get eggs & bacon. There is enough meat on board to last the ship from England & back again. The butcher on board knows his work, he has a crowd around him, he does make short work of it, he is a returned soldier & a good boxer. Did I tell you before about the boxing match arranged to take place at our next port of call, between Bill Carrol heavyweight champion of the AIF & Monty Murton champion of the Australian Navy. It ought to be a good go."

#### WEEK FIVE - SPANISH INFLUENZA

Monday, 30 September

Went for a motor drive round Durban. Had rides in rickshas. Had a game of football with the niggers. Took on coal. All marched to baths & went in surf bathing.

Tuesday, 1 October

Still in Durban. Went to the Zoo, they have a very good collection. We went through the libary & town hall. Had a good time at a private house, plenty of fruit ripe.



Wednesday, 2 October

Left Durban about 6.30 am, had a very good send off. Miss Campbell was there, she is the best girl in Durban for the Aussies. Weather rough from the start. Another gargle.

Thursday, 3 October

Struck very rough weather rounding the cape. Another gargle.

Friday, 4 October

Weather rough, waves breaking over bridge. Passed a merchant vessel bound for Durban. Saw a seal in the water & 1 shark.

Saturday, 5 October

Sighted land 2 pm. weather calmer. Good war news by wireless. Fishing over side of boat, got 3 gummy sharks.

Sunday, 6 October

Arrived at Cape Town about 7.45 am. very pretty in harbor. No shore leave. Epidemic of Spanish influenza in town, niggers dying by hundreds. All trains & ships laid up for want of labor. Put off a little cargo & left the harbor at 7 pm. Sunset lovely behind Table Mount & Lions Head. (Note: part of this entry is in Monday's place.)

#### WEEK SIX - SHIPBOARD INFLUENZA OUTBREAK

Tuesday, 8 October

Well on our way to Sierra Leone. In the danger zone now, no escort available at Cape Town so had to go on our own, rather risky. Passed a big hospital ship at 11 am, with green bands & red crosses all over her. Weather calm & smooth.

Wednesday, 9 October

Influenza broke out on board, 100 reported sick. Evrybody had 10 minutes inhaling Eucalptis, sulphur & steam. Another gargle. Engines working all out to catch a convoy leaving Sierra Leone shortly. If we miss it will have to wait 10 days for another. Alarm 10.30 pm.

Thursday, 10 October

480 reported sick. 2 chaps died & were buried at sea. Went into hospital, temp. 104°.

Friday, 11 October

Still in hospital. Weather fine. Crossed line 2 am.

Saturday, 12 October

In hospital. Getting better. Another chap dead. Heat 109 in shade. (Note: no Sunday entry.)

#### WEEK SEVEN - DEATHS ON BOARD

Monday, 14 October

Still in hospital. Getting better.

Tuesday, 15 October

Hospital.

Wednesday, 16 October

Hospital. Temp 103. 3 chaps died.

Thursday, 17 October

In hospital.

Friday, 18 October

Hospital. 2 more dead.

Saturday, 19 October  
25 died altogether. 16 buried at sea.

Sunday, 20 October  
Arrived Sierra Leone 7.30 am., nice place from boat.

#### WEEK EIGHT - QUARANTINE - TROOPS COALING

Monday, 21 October  
Discharged from hospital still very weak. Missed the convoy, will have to wait a week here.

Tuesday, 22 October  
Boat in quarantine, blacks can't come near to coal so troops have to carry on with coaling.

Wednesday, 23 October  
Weather very hot. 109 in shade. Another troop ship arrived.

Thursday, 24 October  
Niggers diving for coins & selling fruit.

Friday, 25 October  
Took on 70,000 gallons of fresh water.

Saturday, 26 October  
Waiting for convoy.

Sunday, 27 October  
Finished coaling.

#### WEEK NINE - CONVOY FROM SIERRA LEONE

Monday, 28 October  
Swimming over the side of the boat.

Tuesday, 29 October  
Left Sierra Leone 2 pm. 8 ships in convoy & one cruiser.

Wednesday, 30 October  
Manuvering about in convoy, all signalling being done by sirens.

Thursday, 31 October  
Weather getting cooler.

Friday, 1 November  
On guard. One of the monkeys bought at Sierra Leone died & the parrot looks very seedy. One boat left behind with engin trouble.

Saturday, 2 November  
Ships sports in the afternoon. 12th won 2 boxing & one cock fighting competition. Saw a big sun fish, they are about as big as a shark.

Sunday, 3 November  
Church parade 10.30 am. Weather getting a bit rough.

#### WEEK TEN - GOOD WAR NEWS

Monday, 4 November  
Another ship joined our convoy, but was not allowed to travel with us, it being one of the rules of a convoy that no boat shall join up after leaving port.

Tuesday, 5 November  
Cup Day in Melbourne, great discussion as to winner. Kit inspection of complete kit to make up shortages before England. Submarine guard mounted in crows nests, & gun crew on duty continually.

Wednesday, 6 November

Passed two islands on the starboard side. Good war news. Sighted another ship on the horizon.

Thursday, 7 November

Met another escort of the destroyer leader types flying the stars & stripes. Our old escort the "Brittinnia" ran in to Gibraltar.

Friday, 8 November

One of the boats in the convoy had engine trouble & dropped behind 3 miles.

Saturday, 9 November

Weather very rough in the Bay of Biscay. Cargo in one boat shifted & gave her a big list.

Sunday, 10 November

Church parade 10.30 am.



Will on right, probably after having arrived in England, and his hair shaved off after the Spanish Influenza on ship.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

#### WEEK ELEVEN - ARMISTICE

Monday, 11 November, 1918

Two destroyers joined the convoy to escort us in place of American destroyer. The names of small destroyers were AC.3 Scorpion & D4S Courageous. Weather getting very cold. Great preparations for unloading boat.

Tuesday, 12 November

Two boats left the convoy to go to Liverpool. We altered our course & went straight to London. Passed another convoy of 12 boats & 3 destroyers. Wireless news of Armistice being signed, & orders issued to light up ship.

Wednesday, 13 November

Sighted English coast about 9 am. passed two light ships. Chalk cliffs very pretty with sun on them. Passed Brighton 11.30 am. Beachy Head 1 pm. Two more boats left the convoy. Saw four dirigibles. Universal kit bags issued. Passed a convoy of 16 boats & 3 destroyers taking troops to France. Passed Dover 4.30 pm. & saw 4 air ships over the water. Entered the Thames about 11 pm. run into a fog & had to anchor. Our former escort "Brittinnia" reported sunk.

(Note: no Thursday entry.)

Friday, 15 November

Disembarked at 3 pm. & marched to Tilbury station, train left at 4 pm. an aeroplane flew along with the train for 4 miles. Arrived at Tidsworth station at 11.30 pm., and marched 2 miles to camp, & had a hot tea & went to bed at 1 am. Parkhouse No. 2.

Saturday, 16 November

Allowed to sleep in til 8.30 am. had breakfast at 9 am. First parade at 10 am. dinner at 1.45 pm., next parade 3 pm. knocked off at 4, then free for the night. Australia day in London.

Sunday, 17 November

Church parade at 10.30 am. Stayed in hut & wrote letters.

#### WEEK TWELVE - TRAINING & MUMPS OUTBREAK

Monday, 18 November

Carried on with physical culture & squad drill. Did some bombing drill. Saw three aeroplanes loop the loop. Had a dental inspection. Not allowed in YMCA hut or Church of England, nor outside camp, mumps in the camp.

Tuesday, 19 November

Had an inoculation against cholera, not allowed to drill or go outside the lines nor do any hard work. Had a foot inspection.

Wednesday, 20 November

No drill, we were playing football all day. Bath parade. Bought a pair of strides & changed a tunic.

Thursday, 21 November

Went on sick parade, my hair was all falling out. Was put on light duties for the day. Concert in the canteen at night.

Friday, 22 November

Very cold frosty morning, frost very pretty on the ground, all the wash basins frozen. Went for march all round Tidworth & Shipton.

Saturday, 23 November

No drill, went for a walk into Tidworth town. Saw first battle plane. Our rockets being fired all night.

Sunday, 24 November

Raining all day. Put on camp picquet. Church parade 10.30 am.

#### WEEK THIRTEEN - 58TH BATTALION COLOURS

Monday, 25 November

A big bomb dropping battle plane landed in the camp grounds. Went for a route march around Tidworth & Bulford. Kit inspection.

Tuesday, 26 November

Had our issue of winter clothing, sheepskin vest etc. Went on cooks fatigue. Brawl in wet canteen, bottles flying evrywhere. Concert in YMCA.

Wednesday, 27 November

Route marching in the morning. 400 machine gunners left the camp for France. Two cases of mumps. Physical training in the afternoon. Had a few hours of instruction in bomb throwing. Increased food rations.

Thursday, 28 November

Hut orderly for the day. Rainy & squally all day. Stony broke haven't got a brown. 200 Army service men left for France. One case of mumps in our hut.

Friday, 29 November

Pay day great relief. Colours were issued, 58th Batt. red & blue. Dull day. Received a letter from Mary Jonas & learnt that Dick Nicholls had died of wounds. Concert at night in YMCA.

Saturday, 30 November

Physical training in morning. Went into Tidworth market & bought some leather colors. On fire picquet at night. Sent home souvenir of war.

Sunday, 1 December

Church parade 11.30 Rainy day.

#### WEEK FOURTEEN - LEAVE - SCOTLAND

Monday, 2 December

Route marching & games. Physical training in afternoon. 100 machine gunners left for France.

Tuesday, 3 December

Inoculated in the morning. No drill for twenty four hours. Lectures on London.

Wednesday, 4 December

Pay day. Leave tomorrow.

Thursday, 5 December

Revielle 3.45 am. Caught train for London 7 am, reached Waterloo station 11.45 am. Went up to Horseferry Road depot. Saw two of surrendered U boats. Went through Westminster Abbey with guide. Caught train for Edinburgh 8.15 pm.

Friday, 6 December

Travelling all night, crossed the border at 4.15 am. Arrived in Edinburgh 6.30 am. Had breakfast at YMCA hut, got to Miss Kerrs at 9 am. Went down Princes St.

Saturday, 7 December

Went along Kerr St. past the old city wall & down the Vennel & caught a bus to Forth Bridge, walked half way across. Went to see Mr. Jamison & Miss Blackie at Trinity.

Sunday, 8 December

Went to St. Giles cathedral & castle in afternoon.

#### LETTER DATED 2/12/1918

"Dear Mother, Dad & Don,

A few lines to let you know I am still in No. 2 camp Parkhouse in isolation. I think we will soon be moving to another camp to join our unit, the 58th Batt. We received our colors last week purple & red oblong, I am sending one home. We are getting our disembarkation leave straight away, & every dominion troops have to be out of England by Xmas, to make room for the four million tommy soldiers coming home. All men under 19 yrs. are being sent straight back to Australia, & the others over to France to join the 5th Division in the army of occupation, so I have a good chance of seeing the inside of Germany. I suppose I will see some strange things & get in some tight corners, but I have got in with some steady coppers. There are five of us, not one of us have ever touched drink, & I think we will stick together through everything. It is pitiful to see the way some of the boys that came over with us have gone to pieces with the beer, they are regular wrecks. I think a wet canteen in a camp is a curse to the place. I wrote up to Miss Kerr's sisters place in Scotland last week asking if I might visit her & received a reply that I would be most welcome, if I could tell her when I am coming. As it happened Morrie Jonas was staying there when my letter arrived & he wrote to me too. He was on sick leave having been gassed in France in August. He was staying in Scotland 3 days, then going down to Mr. Kerr's brother in Cheshire, England. I learnt from him that Dick Nicholls had died of wounds, poor Ritchie it seemed hard that he should die so near the end of the war. I wonder how Ernie Nicholls got on after leaving the boat at Sierra Leone, it would be hard if he died too. Bert Kerr is in England on furlough, he is at Sutton Venny camp waiting to go on leave, so I might strike him in Scotland at Miss Kerrs place. We will not have as much chance of seeing England as some of the boys have, for once we have leave here we will never come again, but go straight home from France, so I will have to make as much out of my leave as possible. I think I will stay in Scotland 4 days & spend the rest in London. You can get a good tea, bed & breakfast for 2/6 at the YMCA at Horseferry Road & every day they take parties to the different places of interest, Westminster Abbey, Tower of London, etc. I have had to be very careful with my money, I have got £1 in pocket & £5 owing in my paybook. I think that will have to last me 7 days, it is marvelous the way the money goes over here. I won't be able to open an account here now as we won't be here long now. I think I will be able to manage on my 2/- a day. Are you getting the allotment money all right. I see they made a mistake in your name in the paybook. I made inquiries in the pay office here they said it would be all right. I will make further

inquiries at headquarters Horseferry Road. You see it is all very awkward getting no letters I don't know how things are going at home. I think the blessed mail must have gone astray, are you getting all my letters, this is the second since I have been in England. I will start numbering them now this is No. 2. We had our first fall of snow last week. We did have some fun throwing it about, it is not very cold. The cold frosty mornings are by far the worse, evrything freezes hard. I would like to see this place in spring time, when all the trees & bushes are in leaf, evry road is lined with a thick hedge at present they are covered with all kinds of berries. The holly looks the best of the lot. We had a great sight the other day a big fleet of areoplanes came home from France, most of them came to the dome near our camp, there were at least 250 of them. The sky was full of them, the row they made was terrific there were all kinds from light scouts to big heavy battle planes. Evry day after that they were out practicing by jove they do some hair raising tricks, they swoop down & bank over & come down turning over & over like a leaf, righting themselves just as they reach the ground, now & again you would see one going on a level keel, suddenly he would shoot up & turn completely over in a loop the loop. They look all right at night when there are about a dozen up, you can see their lights moving about like falling stars. One morning one of the big battle planes landed in the camp grounds, by jove it was a monster, she could carry the pilot, a bomb operator, an observer & 3 tons of bombs, it had a machine gun in front & two big engins each 500 hp driving two propellers behind the main planes. You would think the thing would never rise, but it ran up the hill & rose like a bird. I have sent home a souvenir I bought here a big rising sun with all the battalion colors painted on it, did you get it all right? How is evrybody keeping at home, are you all well & Grandma & Auntie are they well. I wrote a letter to them this mail. Well I think that is all the news this time so I will say Good bye for the present, (the next time you hear I might be "Somewhere in Germany").

From your loving son & brother,

Will"

#### WEEK FIFTEEN - CAMP - TRAINING

Monday, 9 December

Went all over Holyrood Palace, into the royal rooms. Then went for a walk round the Sailsbury Crags, had a magnificent view of Edinburgh. In afternoon went to Museum & Greyfriars Church yard. Saw the mytars tomb. Saw John Koxe's house in High Street.

Tuesday, 10 December

Went down to Portabello and esplanade, a very nice beach. Called at Mr. Will Kerr's place & had tea there. Caught train for London at 7 pm. Travelling all night, went to sleep on the rack.

Wednesday, 11 December

Arrived at Kings Cross at 6.30 am, had breakfast at YMCA hut. Had to wait till 1 pm for a train for Tidworth, so went for a walk down the Strand, around to Trafalgar Squ. & back over Westminster Bridge. Caught train for Tidworth at 1 pm & arrived at 4 pm.

Thursday, 12 December

On guard, a very miserable day, snow on the ground.

Friday, 13 December  
Evrybody preparing to leave camp.

Saturday, 14 December  
Shifted into No. 6 camp 14 TB Hurdcott, not a bad place. Lecture in YMCA.

Sunday, 15 December  
Medical exam in the morning.

#### WEEK SEVENTEEN - MEDAL PRESENTATIONS

Monday, 16 December  
Handed in our leather equipment & were issued with web. Had 2 hours baynot fighting. Issued with rifles. Had a dental inspection. Pay day.

Tuesday, 17 December  
Carried on with squad drill, baynot fighting & musketry & physical training. Concert in YMCA, a very good one. Parcel from home.

Wednesday, 18 December  
Raining all day.

Thursday, 19 December  
Training. Concert in canteen at night. Route march through Fovant, Hurdcott & Winton 16 miles.

Friday, 20 December  
Brigade parade for presentation of medals won in France. Major General McKay presented them, 5 DCM's 2 MM's & 2 MC's, 3000 men on parade.

Saturday, 21 December  
Went for a walk into Fovant. Fall of snow. Concert in YMCA very good one. The Jesters.

Sunday, 22 December  
Church parade 10 am. Song service YMCA at 7 pm.

#### LETTER DATED 22/12/18 WITH NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS

"Dear Don,

A few lines in answer to your most welcome letter dated 24/10/18. I was so sorry to hear that poor Syd had died in Palestine after sticking it out so long. I pity his Mother she must have been cut up about it.

Well at present I am in camp at Hurdcott, Wiltshire, doing 6 weeks hard training, although the war is practically over we have to do our full course, evry morning we do squad drill, musketry & physical training, in the afternoon, gas attacking in the gas chamber, bayonet fighting & extended order drill. It is hard work at times drilling in the mud & snow. Vic Cumberland the big St.Kilda follower in football is one of the instructors in baynot fighting, he is very good at it, he will let a man run at him with the baynot & have it off the rifle before it touches him. All the instructors we have are straight over from France, so we will get the latest ideas. Evry Wednesday afternoon we go for a route march, each time they get longer. Our last one was about 15 miles with full pack up, the band comes with us which is a great help, there are 34 instruments in it, including two flutes & two picalows. They play some bonza march tunes it seems to lift your feet along. I can tell you they are some band, each man has

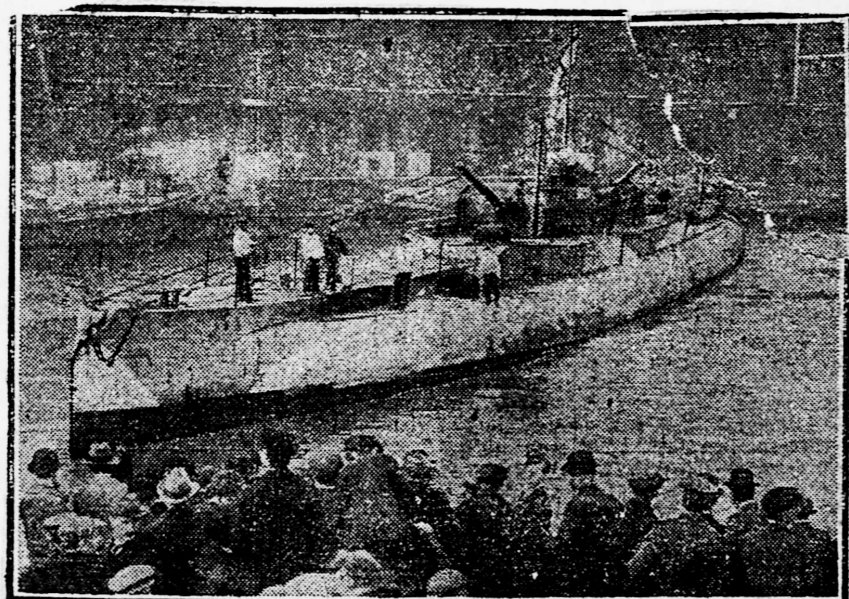


bright green shoulder straps & polished buttons. The guy that walks in front waving the stick is 6 ft. 3 in. high & weighs 14 stone. By jove he can send the stick around, it is a bonza silver mounted one with a kangaroo on top. They came second in the inter allied competitions in London, an American band won it. The other day there was a big brigade parade at the Codford camp for the presentation of medals won in France. Major General McKay came out to present them. There were 5 DCM's, 2 MM's & 2 MC's. The chaps did look proud when they got them. There were 3000 of us on parade altogether, the combined bands from the 3 training battalions marched us past, it was a sight worth seeing. We are not getting too much tucker here yet, but it is gradually getting better. I weighed myself the other day & I went 12 stone 8 lbs., so rationing is not doing me much harm. When we went on leave they gave us a coupon book to get meat & sugar etc. By jove I did have a good time on leave. The most wonderful things I saw ever the submarines & the Forth Bridge. The subs were marvelous, they looked like destroyers with their guns & wireless poles. They have four periscopes so as they could have a constant lookout all ways. Only troops & sailors were allowed down below, we went down, they are a perfect mass of machinery & rows of dynamos like those at the picture shows, we had a look through the periscope. All the reflections from the 4 glasses on top reflect on to one big glass below & you have a perfect view in all directions. The Forth bridge is another wonderful affair. You would have to see it to realise the entanglement of girders, beams & tubes, it must have been a master architect that designed it. I wish you were over here Don to see some of the architecture in the old buildings, it is beautiful in the Westminster Abbey & Houses of Parliament. I think most of the buildings in Scotland are more superior than those in England. London seems to be too crowded to enjoy yourself, nobody seems to have a minute to spare. In Edinburgh it is more open & aristocratic. They have nice wide streets & big buildings, the people there will go out of their way to do you a good turn. What struck me most was that all the motor buses had these big gas bags on top, some of the private cars have them too. It is very funny to see a Ford with one, they look top-heavy enough at any time, but with a big gas bag on top they look ridiculous. Everything is done over here to save petrol. For heavy loads they have steam engines, they are just like little traction engines but are easier to handle, they go at about 15 mph. I got the parcel Mum sent alright it was a bit knocked about, one of the tins of sugar was squashed, it spilt all over the parcel. I was glad to get the raisins & milk, in fact the whole lot was exactly what I wanted. Well Don it is getting well on to Xmas now only 3 days to go. I wonder if I will be home next Xmas, you never know your luck in this world. I might be stiff enough to strike garrison work up the Rhine. I will not close this letter till after Xmas day so as I can tell you what sort of a time I had.

Well I thought we were going to have a miserable time, but it turned out all right. We drilled up till Tuesday dinner time then went into the woods & gathered a lot of holly & fir trees to decorate the hut, the holly looked bonza covered with red berries. Christmas eve the two coppers & I went for a joy ride into Wilton, a little village about 15 miles away. We saw a car outside a big house, a lady & gent were just coming out to it so we asked them if they were going far, only in fun, they told us to hop in, by jove he did make the car shift, we were into Wilton in no time. The lady & gent went in to a friends place & their friend would

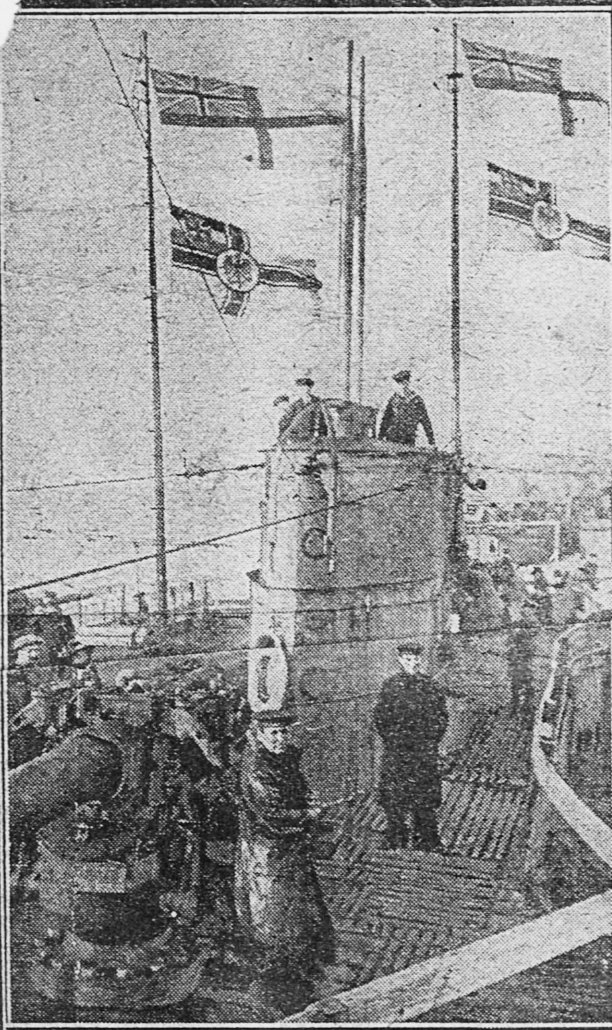
make us have a cup of tea, then they did some shopping & drove back home. We arrived in camp about 10.30 pm, so we didn't do bad, in the first place we intended going to the pictures. That tells you what a bit of cheek does. Christmas morning broke a regular freezer, all the taps & wash basins were frozen solid, it was a very severe frost. At breakfast we had porridge, roast duck & cakes. About 9 o'clock the sun came out & things began to warm up a little. They gave us Xmas boxes from the Lady Stanley comforts fund, they had in them milk, cheese, butter, cigarets, chocolate, plum pudding & a few other things. There was a church parade at 10.30 am it was a very nice service. For dinner we had first, beer or ginger ale, then soup, roast duck & potatoes, plum puddings, then nuts. We had our sargents waiting on us, the spirit of Xmas was there all right, nobody cared what they did, a lot of the officers were merry. In the afternoon we went for a walk over the hills, there was still plenty of ice about, we were having fights with it. Tea time we had cold duck, pudding & nuts & drinks, the canteens were open after tea & you could get free beer if you wanted it & free feeds, there is to be a concert afterwards but I must finish this letter now Don as the mail goes out tomorrow (Boxing Day). Give my love to Mother & Dad & all my friends. Well goodbye for the present from your loving brother, Will 25/12/18

p.s. The clippings are two of the subs that were up the Thames."

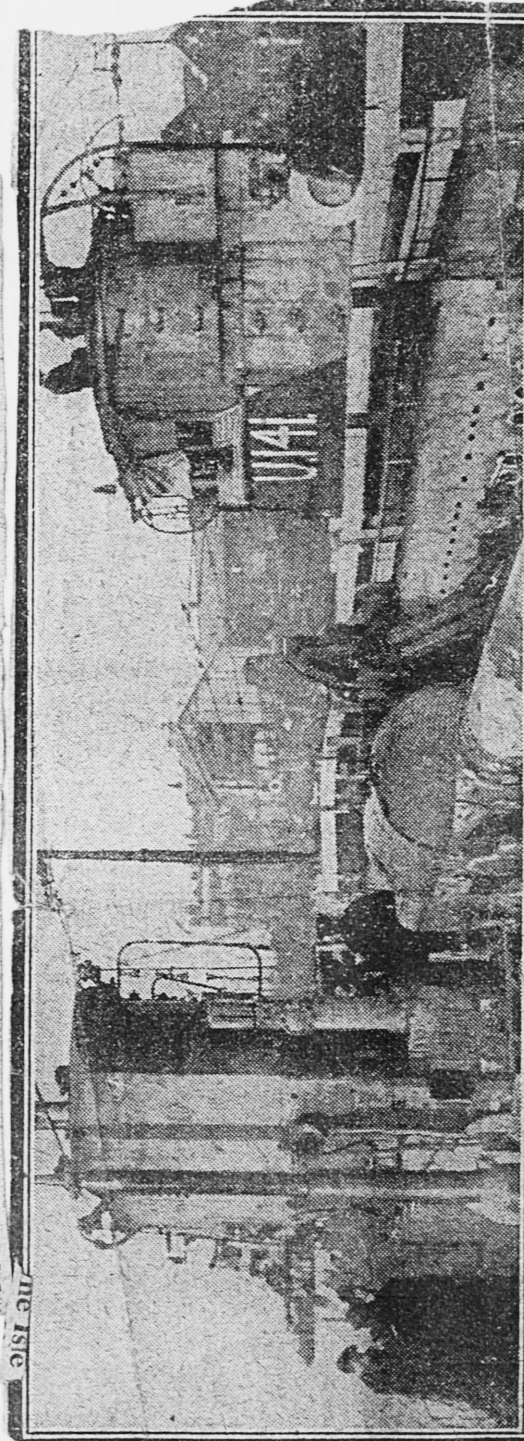


**The "Deutschland" U-boat in St. Katherine's Dock.**

—Several of the surrendered German U-boats have been on show in the Thames. Our picture shows the U55 (the "Deutschland") arriving at St. Katherine's Dock, where she has been berthed with the mystery-ship, H.M. "Q" ship "Suffolk Coast," one of a new class of vessel specially contrived for deception allied with deadliness, to allure the U-boats within range of their hidden guns and then sink them. (Sport and General.)



A striking photograph showing the British Ensign floating above the German flag on board two of the surrendered U-boats, which are now on view at Portsmouth and attracting large crowds of visitors.



The surrendered pirate craft. As a result of their being on show the funds of the Sailors' and Marines' Orphans' Home will benefit.

### WEEK SEVENTEEN - CHRISTMAS CHEER

Monday, 23 December.

Canteen fatigue, had to scrub out the two canteens.. On Compton Chamberlane picquet. Concert in concert hall by the "Kookaburras".

Tuesday, 24 December

Hut orderly for the day. Gathering holly & fir trees to decorate the hut. Went for a joy ride into Wilton in a private car. Concert in YMCA by the "Chums".

Wednesday, 25 December

Very cold frosty morning, turned out a lovely day. Xmas boxes from Lady Stanley comforts fund issued. Church service in YMCA at 10 am. Had a lovely dinner roast duck, plum pudding & nuts. Went for a walk over the hills. Cold duck, pudding & drinks for tea. Concert in hall at night.

Thursday, 26 December

On camp picquet, not allowed to leave camp. Concert, dance & free feeds in the YMCA. Very cold day.

Friday, 27 December

Carried on with drill. Filled in our demobilisation papers. Canteen picquet at night.

Saturday, 28 December

Kit inspection. P.T. & drill. Went into Fovant, saw through the old cathedral, some graves there dated 1665. Concert at night in YMCA No. 7 camp by a Scotch party. Very good.

Sunday, 29 December

Church parade 10.30. Went to pictures in night.

### WEEK EIGHTEEN - DRILL & CONCERTS

Monday, 30 December

Drilling all day. Pantomime in concert hall at night, an extra good one. Parcel from Graham St.

Note: No Tuesday entry.

Wednesday, 1 January, 1919

On guard, a bad beginning for the new year. A wet cold miserable day.

Thursday, 2 January

Had a holiday today instead of yesterday. Concert in YMCA by Zig Zags.

Friday, 3 January

On quarter masters guard. Compton picquet at night.

Saturday, 4 January

Went into Sailsbury on a days leave. Saw over the cathedral.

Sunday, 5 January

Church parade 10.30 Fall of snow.

LETTER DATED 6/1/19.

"Dear Mother, Dad & Don,

A few lines to let you know I am still in the best of sprits, as I hope this finds you. I did not have a very nice New Years day this time. I was on guard, it was a bitterly cold day, snowing & raining all day & night, we were nearly frozen on our beats. To make matters worse two prisoners escaped, our sergeant of the guard was a very decent chap, he let them out of their cells to get warm by the fire, the mean curs took advantage of it & did a bolt, they worked it well, the lights had been going on & off all night, so one of them shut the doors so as we would not see the lights outside, then switched the light off & walked out, of course we thought it was another break down until one of us remembered hearing the switch, we jumped up put the lights on & saw that two of them were missing. We locked up the others, got some ball ammunition, fixed bayonets, the seargent had a revolver & we started off on a manhunt at 2 am. it was raining cats & dogs, we could not see where we were going. One chap fell into a chalk pit with full pack up & was nearly drowned when we found him. Well we didn't catch them, & we are up as witnesses in a court martial against our sergeant, so that was a bad beginning for the new year, a bit different to last New Years day, do you remember? I was at the Van Vean picnic with Olive, Irene, Ida & Will Kerr. I was thinking of that while I was pacing up & down. Well they took pity on us & gave those who had been on guard for the New Year a whole holiday on Saturday & a pass into Sailsbury. The cobbors & I left camp at 8 am, it was too early for a motor so we had to walk 9 miles & arrived there about 10 am. We went straight out to the cathedral it is a magnificent building, it is the only cathedral that is in its original condition, all the others have been added to or rebuilt, so there is no modern work about it, evry pillar & arch is work of the 13th century. The carvings in solid stone on the monuments are wonderful, but best of all is the pure alibaster altar, it is undescribable. There is a brass monument for a Bishop Wyvill dated 1375 which is a very early stage for brass, it is said to be the first of its kind. We saw a tomb of a child borne in May 1760 died Feb. of the same year & was 11 months old, there it was carved in the stone, our guide said there is a history to it, but would not explain it. In the body of the church were hanging the colors of the 5th Tunneling corps (Aust) & the 32nd & 43rd Battalions, which shows you what the people of Sailsbury think of the Aussies. When we were coming out we were allowed to sign our names in the visitors book. That is a great honor, so far 2000 pages are filled with monograms. At different points of the town are big iron gates, which were used in the olden days to stop any enemy from approaching the cathedral. After that we went for a walk round the town. Sailsbury itself is not a bad place, but to h... with the plains. I think if you searched the whole of England & Scotland you would not find a bleaker hole. The market square is a big feature of the town, it is lined with barrows & you can buy anything, fish, flesh or fowl, but you have to pay for it. There is a market place called poultry cross it was built in 1342, originally there were 4 of them, one for poultry, one for fish, horses & cattle, this is the only one left. At night we went to the theatre, paid a shilling & got a front stall seat, it was a very good show. A guy there was playing the violin he could imitate anything from a church organ to a circular saw.

We caught a motor back to camp at 11.30 pm. I think it was worth going on guard for after all. The day before New Year I got a parcel & letter from the Miss Kerrs, it was very kind of them to think of me, I am sending the letter home, the parcel had in it, apples, oranges, chocolate, cakes, a writing pad, which are just the things we can't get here. In the next parcel you send from home will you put in some strong leather laces if you can get them, you get such rotten things over here. I see by the cobblers letters they heard in Melb. that ONE OR TWO of our chaps died coming over, they will have got a surprise when they got our letters. My word it is playing up with our chaps now. The influenza weakened their lungs & they're all getting bronchitis, colds & all those complaints. So far I have kept clear of them all, it affected me by my hair falling out, it was coming out by the handfulls. I got it shaved right off, it is growing allright now but its terraibly cold. I have never worn my scarfe yet I think that is what gives you colds, all the old soldiers say that too. Well I must close now with fondest love to all from your loving Son & Brother,

Will

p.s. I received a card from Mrs. Rofo yesterday, remember me kindly to her & Mr. Rofo & Lilian, Will.  
Show other letter to Mrs. Kerr."

#### WEEK NINETEEN - DRILL

Monday, 6 January

Drilling all day. Fire picquet at night. Concert by the Jesters.

Tuesday, 7 January

Canteen fatigue. Raining all day. Pictures in No. 7 YMCA.

Wednesday, 8 January

Gas drill. Bayonet fighting & route marching.

Thursday, 9 January

On QM fatigue, carting blankets about.

Friday, 10 January

On guard. 28 men of our unit left camp to join AAMC.

Saturday, 11 January

On guard, very cold day. 60 officers came into camp.

(Note: no Sunday entry).

#### WEEK TWENTY - DRAFT TO FRANCE

Monday, 13 January

On guard. Four new prisoners in clink.

Tuesday, 14 January

On guard.

Wednesday, 15 January

Relieved from guard, not very sorry. Concert at night in YMCA.

Thursday, 16 January

Went through final gas & bombing test. Concert in hall by Zig Zags

Friday, 17 January

Warned for draft to France, stripped of all extra clothing & equipment. Walked into Wilton at night.

Saturday, 18 January

Issued with new gas masks & tin lids. On guard.

Sunday, 19 January

Church parade 10.30 am.



## CHAPTER THREE

### EUROPE

#### WEEK TWENTYONE - ENGLAND TO FRANCE

Monday, 20 January, 1919

On guard. Concert in hall at night.

Tuesday, 21 January

Filling in trenches. Concert at night.

Wednesday, 22 January

Went through more gas. Trench filling. Concert in YMCA.

Thursday, 23 January

On guard relieved at 10 pm, to pack for France in the morning.

Friday, 24 January

Left camp 6 am, arrived Sth. Hampton 11.30 am. Went on board USS "Charles" 6 pm. Pulled into tide & anchored all night.

Saturday, 25 January

Left England 5 am. passed Isle of Wight 7 am. Landed at LeHavre. Left in train at 7.30 am for Charleroi.

Sunday, 26 January

Stopped at Abancourt for breakfast.

#### LETTER DATED 26//1/19

"Dear Mother,

A few lines to let you know I am in France at last, of course as usual we came over with a rush. Thursday night we were on guard, about 10 pm, word came round that we were leaving camp at 4 am. They had to rake up another guard to relieve us, it was 11.15 by this time, so there was no sleep for us. Well we left camp about 5 am Friday. There were 1000 from our camp & 1500 from Sutton Veny, so I am not the only one over here that has not seen fighting. We arrived at Southampton at 11.30 am & had to march 4 miles to get some dinner. I was in the leading four of 2500 men, you could hardly see the end of them. We had a great crowd watching us. We went aboard our boat the USS "Charles" at 6 o'clock, pulled out to the tide & anchored all night. About 5 am we left England, passed the Isle of Wight at 7 am. My word she was a lovely boat, evrything the latest & does 30 knots. Formerly she was a pleasure boat running between New York & Coney Island. I was talking with an American sailor for a good while, they blow their country up a bit but I think they have something to blow about judging by their ships, the Mauritionia was in at Sth. Hampton, by jove she is a monster. We landed at Le Havre at 12.30 & marched 3 miles to the station & got the shock of our lives, we had to travel in cattle trucks, built for 10 horses or 30 men. Before the train left they gave us tea, the first bite since breakfast, and such a tea, 2 hard biscuits a bit of cheese & 1 egg. I think the eggs were laid before the war they were blue & green, nobody could eat them. There are a terrible lot of Chinese working over here on the wharves & railways & the German prisoners are cooks for them, fancy waiting on Chows. There are miles & miles of surrendered German engins & trucks here, some of the engins are monsters, the heaviest in Australia come nowhere near them. When you see all these & their U boats etc. you begin to realise that the Hun is beaten.

At 7.30 our train left, I don't think I will ever forget that journey & they tell us we have 6 more days of it yet, the blessed wheels in our truck were not round & they were bump bump bump all the way. Sleep was out of the question you would just doze off & the train would stop & things would fly, it was all right starting you could hear the banging coming along the train & be prepared. We had one blanket, but had to spread it on the floor to keep out of the dirt, I took my boots off & wrapped my two scarves round my feet they were nearly frozen. We arrived at Abbeycourt about 7 am, it was snowing like fun. We have had our breakfast dinner & tea here & will be leaving in the morning. It is funny here, if you ask any guy the time & he tells you 19.40 you have to think awhile before you know it is twenty to eight pm. Well Mother dear I must close now & get back to the hut or I may miss the bus, it is 11.30 pm now. So Goodbye for the present with fondest love to Dad, Don & yourself, from your loving son "Will"

#### WEEK TWENTYTWO - ON THE MOVE

Monday, 27 January

Walked into Blaryies. 200 diggers had a pitched battle with snow.

Tuesday, 28 January

Left Abancourt 8 am. Passed through Amiens 2 pm. Very cold in trucks.

Wednesday, 29 January

Passed through Mons 2 am, arrived Charleroi 5 am. Stayed there 6 hours. Left for Beaumont in motor transports. Billeted in a big factory.

Thursday, 30 January

Went through old castle & underground passages. Walked around Beaumont.

Friday, 31 January

Left Beaumont 11.30 am in motor transports arrived at Doulers 4 pm. Joined the bttn. & billeted in a big barn.

Saturday, 1 February

Kit inspection. Explored some of the ruined houses & found Fritz helmet, gas mask & other things. Applied for a job in motor transport.

Sunday, 2 February

Walked in to St. Aubin & had a skate.

#### WEEK TWENTYTHREE - AMALGAMATION OF 57th & 58th.

Monday, 3 February

Went into Aulnoy on coal fatigue, place terribly knocked about.

Tuesday, 4 February

Stayed in billet.

Wednesday, 5 February

On coal fatigue to Aulnoy. Very cold day. Dance in YMCA.

Thursday, 6 February

Had a game of hockey with 29th ASC

Friday, 7 February

57 Btt. amalgamated with us. Shifted into new billets.



Saturday, 8 February  
Playing hockey with ASC.

Sunday, 9 February  
Church parade 10.30 am.

#### WEEK TWENTYFOUR - KILLING TIME

Monday, 10 February  
Official amalgamation of 57th & 58th battn.

Tuesday, 11 February  
Route march. Kit inspection. Dance in Hars chatteau.

Wednesday, 12 February  
Got a job in the office as runner.  
(Note: no Thursday entry).

Friday, 14 February  
Played 59th battalion football & were beaten by 2 goals.  
(note: no Saturday entry).

Sunday, 16 February  
Church parade 10.30 am.

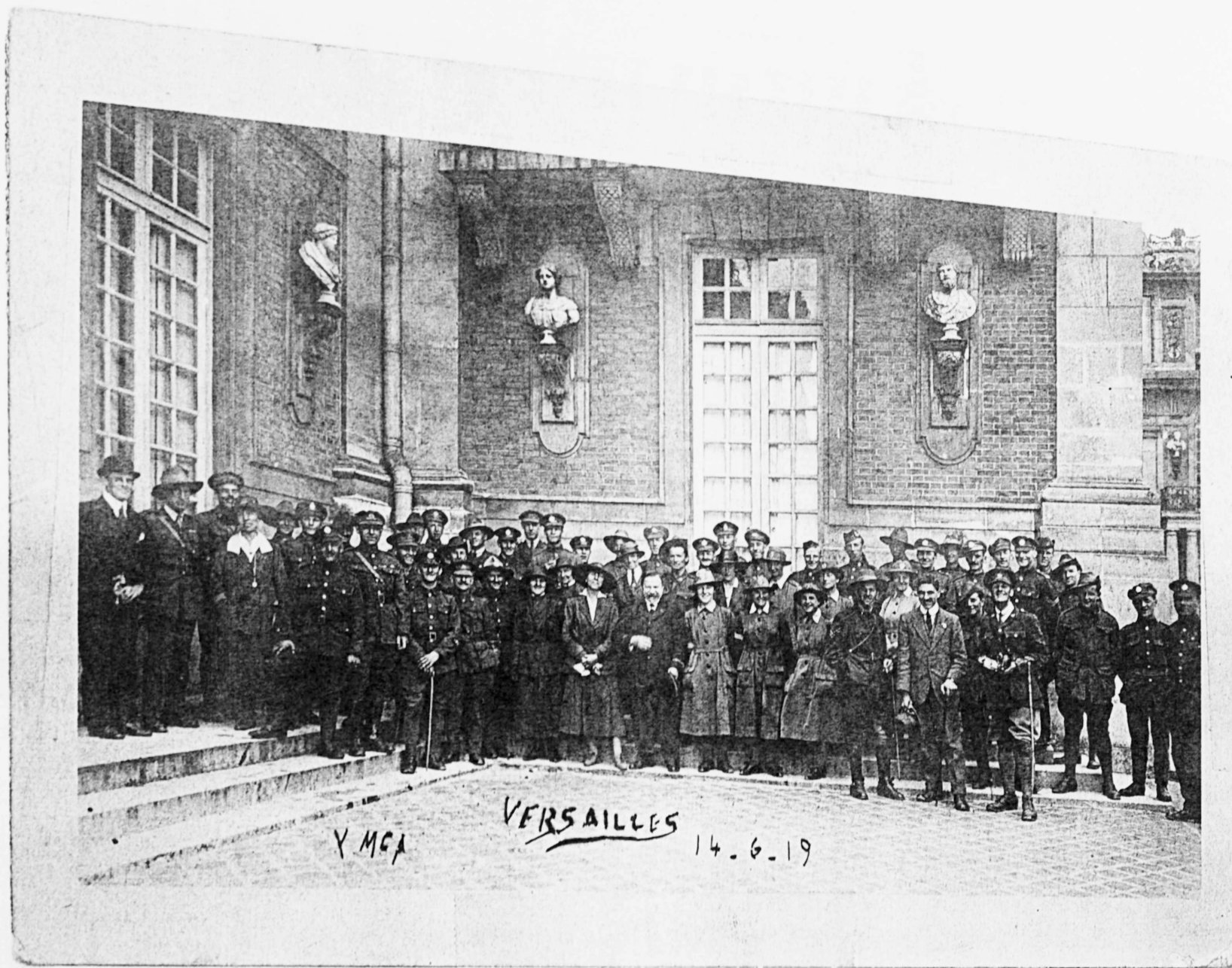
#### WEEK TWENTYFIVE - STILL KILLING TIME

Monday, 17 February  
Pictures in an old barn. Lieut. Moon rejoined unit after receiving his VC.

Tuesday, 18 February  
A few families coming back to their homes. Dance in YMCA.  
(Note: quite a few days marked "killing time").

Friday, 28 February  
5th Division played 3rd football. 3rd won by 5 points.

Saturday, 1 March  
Marching out parade.



PRIVATE WILLIAM McBEATH - THIRD FROM RIGHT OF PHOTOGRAPH

LETTER DATED 26/12/19

"Dear Mother,

A few lines to let you know I am in the best of health & sprits as I hope this finds you. I had such a bonza mail from Australia this week, 4 from you, 1 from Auntie Ada, 1 from Don, George Cockroft, Ivy Smith, & Ivy Upham, the mail has not finished coming in yet so I might get some more. I was very sorry to hear of dear Grandma's death, poor old soul. I did not realise how good she had been to us all until I left, I was glad she lived to hear that the war was over & that she died such a quiet & peaceful death. It must have been a hard blow for you & Auntie Ada, poor Auntie must have been in a way with her broken rib & bad back & not being able to be with Grandma to the last after looking after her so faithfully all along. I see by the newspaper clippings you sent over there was a bit of a row about our boat, if ever there was a disgrace to Australia that was, it was every bit as bad as the papers say, if anything worse, but I told you a few of the things before so will not go into detail again. I met a chap in the 57th Battn. whose brother died on board, I had two souviner books of the boat so I gave him one & am sending the other home, there is a nice memorium in it to the boys who died. Things must have been pretty lively in Melbourne on Armistice night by all accounts, Ivy Upham was in the thick of it as usual, she gave me a very good account of it all. The first we heard of it was the destroyers bellowing it through a megaphone to us. There was some cheering, we were too fed up of the trip to do much.

You were talking about that Durban mail, you would be interested to know how it was posted. I wrote it at Durban & intended to get stamps & post it at Cape Town so as to let it go as a civilian letter & not be censored, well we arrived at Cape Town & the first thing we heard was no shore leave, we were anchored away out in the harbor, I thought that was the end of my letters. However a little later on an old barge came out with some vegetables to come on board, they were all niggers on it, they stopped right near our porthole. I spotted an honest looking chap & beckoned him over, made him understand & gave him 8 letters & 2/-d to stamp & post them, he must have kept his word. There were only two of us got letters off there. My word Will Kerr must have got a very nasty crack, to break his finger like that, Bill is always in the wars, he is not satisfied scaring the wits out of us getting sick but he must go & break his finger. So he made use of my tunic after all, I don't think I will be able to wear that one when I get back, I have grown so much. However when I get home I will be in civvies in double quick time, no more kaki for me for a while anyhow. I will not like the idea of stiff collars though. I have not seen or heard of Ernie Nicholls since Sierra Leone, he is not half the man I thought he was, he let me in for 8/- the only and last time I ever lent money in the army. Once bitten twice shy. I lent it to him the first time I met him in Melbourne, he put it off evry pay day so I gave him my opinion of him very forcibly one day & let it drop. I was very surprised to hear that George Winnet had married an English girl I knew Olive would not make a fuss as things were going that way when I left, she can never keep a secret for her tongue. It is very funny over here a lot of the chaps are trying to get home without their wives, there is always a crowd round the troopships looking for their husbands with a policeman ready to grab him. A man would feel a goat just walking on the boat & a john to grab him. The girls in England are getting very affectionate now the war is

over, they want to cotton on to some mug to marry & take them out to Aussie, but they will have to go some to catch me, for the minute I lob in London I am off up to Edinburg again where I will be in safe keeping with the Miss Kerrs. I get letters very regularly from Graham Street, they keep the blues away while I am waiting for the Aussie mail, I am sending one home if there is room for it. Well Mother there is nothing doing over here now, time drags terribly, they try to make things a bit lively, last week they rigged up a picture show in an old barn, goodness knows where the machinery came from but they got it, it does not show bad pictures either, only sometimes they are upside down or perhaps break down for half an hour or so, but that only adds to the amusement. Now & again there is a dance at a big chatteau, we have the band for music & French lassies for partners, they are very pretty girls & lovely dancers, they have started a school for beginners in the battn. I attend it, quite a new departure in military life, dancing classes. I play football with the Battalion team now. I only played twice with the company, if I am lucky I might get a game with the Brigade team, we are out training evry second day, it is pretty rough but I am used to that now & can give as much as I get, it helps to keep me in good nick, we have played 6 matches & won 4, our next match is with the 56th battn., the footballers escape all duties. We are shifting soon up to Charleroi to join the 2nd division, it will be lively enough up there. There are grave roumers around about the Belgian people rising about the food shortage, they are practically starving, one of our officers came back from Brussels yesterday he said they have got troops & machine guns ready in the streets. The whole world seems to be upside down over here what with riots in Edinburg & Berlin & strikes in England, they might wait till we get home. There is plenty of leave knocking around now if you only had the money, either to Paris, Cologne (Germany), Brussels or any of the southern cities, Nice, Marsails, Rouen, etc., they say Paris is absolutely the prettiest city in the world, a couple of our sargents were there last week they said nobody should go back without seeing it, it knocks London sky high, but it is not worth sending home for money now & I want all mine for leave in Blighty, I might go to Brussels it is only 12 miles from Charleroi. Nurse Cavell's grave is there & the famous field of Waterloo is only 1 mile out of Brussels, you can do that leave on 150 francs or £6. Well I think that is all the news this time so I will say Bon Swar for the present with love to all at home from your loving son Will XXX

p.s. I will write to Don soon & congratulate him on commencement of his future home.'

#### WEEK TWENTYSEVEN - FOOTBALL

Monday, 3 March

Had my first game of cricket for season.

Tuesday, 4 March

General Tivvey presented 59th Battn. with the football shield 1918-1919. Dance in chatteau.

Wednesday, 5 March

4th Division played 5th football, 4th won by 4 points.

Thursday, 6 March

Draft of 68 men left battn. for Australia.

Friday, 7 March

Billeting party left battn. to pick billets in new place.

Saturday, 8 March

Dance in chatteau.

#### WEEK TWENTYEIGHT - LONG, LONG ROUTE MARCH

Monday, 10 March

Final dance in chatteau. All preparing for route march tomorrow.

Tuesday, 11 March

Left Doulers 10 am, a full pack, 2 blankets & 2 days ration. Band leading headquarters A, B, C Coys. Transports. Arrived at Sars Potterie 1.45 pm. billeted for night. 13 K.

Wednesday, 12 March

Left Sars Potteries 10 am. passed through Sobie Le Chatteau 11.15 am. Crossed Belgian frontier 12.15 pm. Arrived Chivery 2.15 pm. & billeted. 18 K.

Thursday, 13 March

Left Chivery 9.45 am. passed the line where fighting ceased On 11th Nov. 18. Passed Sobie Le Gary 12 noon, arrived Barbancon 1.50 pm & billeted. 17 K.

Friday, 14 March

Left Barbancon 10 am. arrived Bousso Les Walcourt 1.15 pm. 12 K.

Saturday, 15 March

Settling down in billets. Got our passes for Brussels.

Sunday, 16 March

Left Walcourt 9 am. arrived Brussels 7 pm. Lovely city.

#### LETTER DATED 14/3/19

"Dear Mother, A few lines to let you know I am in the best of health & spirits as I hope this finds all at home. I received a letter from Dad a few days ago, you don't know how pleased I was to get it. I must answer it the next mail. Well I am back in Belgium again now, we have just finished a four days route march, we arrived here about 4 hours ago & are pretty stiff. On Monday night we had the final dance in Doulers, the people were very sorry we were leaving, the poor old Madam in our billet was crying when we left, she is there all on her own, the Huns took her husband & daughter away to Germany & her son was badly wounded, so she has had her share of trouble. The Australian people can not realise what the French & Belgians had to put up with. We left Doulers at 10 am. Tuesday morning the band leading, headquarters, A B C D Coys, transports & an ambulance, we carried full marching order, two blankets & a water proof, I can tell you it was some weight, all through the march we did  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour & rested 5 minutes, the first days march was not so bad we only did 13 kilos arriving at Sars Potteries 2 pm., the town takes its name from the large pottery works there, they are a bit knocked about but are worth looking over, this is a good sized town with a population of 2460, we were billeted in a private house, I got some Condys fluid & bathed my feet. We left again at 10 am. next morning, as soon as we left the town we could see a big tower in the next town it did not seem far but it took us  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours to reach it, this was at Sobie Le Chatteau another big town, population 2770, the headquarters of the 5th division are

billeted there, so we had to make a good show going through here, the band was doing its best, it is wonderful how a band helps you on a march, we left this town behind & at 12.15 pm. crossed the Belgian frontier, the country was very hilly now, we had to put our heads down to it all the day, the pack was beginning to feel like a ton weight. To make matters worse (I had to leave off here as my leave for Brussels came out in a hurry, so I will continue now) it started to rain, an aeroplane came down alongside us, the aviator had lost himself & wanted to know where he was, we arrived at our next billets at 2.15 pm. in a place called Chivery (18 kilos today). I was billeted in a big dairy, the people were very good to us, gave us plenty of eggs & fresh milk. I wouldn't have minded staying there a few weeks. However, at 9.45 am. we were on our way again, at 11.15 am. we passed the line where fighting stopped at 11 am. 11th Nov. Passed through Sobie St Gary at 12 noon a fair sized place & arrived at Barbenceon 1.50 pm. where we were billeted. 17 kilos. At first we intended stopping here, but the billets were so bad that orders came out at 10 pm. to continue to march next day. We left at 10 am. & arrived at our destination (Bousso Les Walcourt) at 1.15 pm. 60 kilos or about 40 miles from where we started at Doulers. We had hardly got settled in our new billet, when on Saturday night two passes came out for Brussels in the morning, & as we had plenty of money, the cobbler & I decided to take them, the cobbler is a boy from Croxton, Beconsfield Pde. We set out at 9.30 am. on Sunday morning, walked into Beaumont (11 K) & caught a motor transport into Chaleroi, arrived there just in time to miss the 2 pm train for Brussels, we would have caught it only we were rushing round trying to find somebody who could speak English. Well we had to wait till 5.30 pm. so went for a walk around the town. We got our train alright, just outside Chaleroi is a terrible lot of wrecked Hun trucks & engines which Fritz blew up when the armistice was signed, he could not get them away. We arrived at Brussels about 7 pm., now we had the job of finding the YMCA, for a start we got on the wrong car & went miles out of our way. We did not find the YMCA but the 2nd Divy rest home, which was twice as good. You get all meals & a nice clean bed free, we booked beds & went to a vaudeville show, Sunday is the same as any day here, they have lovely theatres, the city doesn't wake up till 11.30 pm. When we came out of the show it was one blaze of light. The streets there are lovely, most of the buildings are white & the bright white lights show them up alright. There is one cross roads, you can stand at & as far as you can see are four lines of white lights. I have never seen anything like it before, we went to bed at 2 am. Up again at 8.30 next morning, had breakfast & went with a guide on a tour around Brussels. First we went to the Stock Exchange, this is a very busy place & fine building, next to the Theatre Royal, the grandest of grand operas, it is a sort of graduating theatre for all the good singers of the world, once they have sung successfully there they can sing anywhere in the world. Madam Melba made her name there. I went to an opera here but will come to that later. Next we went to the Market square, surrounded by beautiful buildings, the Town Hall is the best of them, it is a nice place inside. Fritz has broken up most of the furniture for firewood. Then went to the Law Court or Palace of Justice, the largest & most beautiful in the world, you will see by the cards I send home it is a nice place, but you can not realise the work

there is in them. The guide took us all through them. Every piece of it is the finest of marble. Fritz was billeted in here & as usual made a beast of himself, tore down the beautiful curtains for blankets, ripped the leather off the seats & broke up the furniture. He had a wireless station & machine gun emplacements on top of the place, it was outside here that he manufactured a film to show how the people of Belgium welcomed the Hun troops, he dressed up his own troops & had them waving handkerchiefs, our guide is an old Brussels resident & was there all through the occupation, he was telling us some funny incidents. From there we went to the art Gallery, they have some beautiful statuary there. I can only give you a rough description of these places, I will tell you more when I get home. Then we passed the Kings Palace but could not go inside, it looks very nice from the outside. Then to the column of Congress, we climbed to the top of this, up a narrow spiral staircase in the dark, I was pretty giddy when I reached the top, it was well worth it, we had a splendid panoramic view of the city. We visited the tomb of the men who fought for Belgium's freedom when ruled by the Austrians, every year there is a procession through the city & to the tombs to honor their heroes, well Fritz put sentries at every corner of the square & stopped them the last 3 years. From there through one of the biggest banks in the city & home for dinner. After dinner we went to the museum, they have some pottery there made 4000 BC, most of the valuable things have just come back from England where they were sent for safety. Then we went to where Nurse Cavell was shot & buried. I have got two leaves off her grave also a piece of the bluestone she was standing on when shot, they are the two most treasured souvenirs I have got so far, the cemetery where she is buried is at the back of the rifle range about 300 yds. from where she was shot & contains 80 bodies of people shot for various offences in the city, including 4 girls & 2 women, they are going to shift Nurse Cavell's body across to England. Then we went to the senate & saw the room the Fritzes tried Nurse Cavell in, they have not damaged this place at all. Then home to tea & got an officer to stamp our passes for Antwerp (Anvers) & booked our tickets, then went to the pictures. Up at 8 am next morning, booked seats for Theatre Royal at YMCA it only cost us 6/- each, ordinary it is 12/- to £3, we got £1.10/- seat, we caught the train for Antwerp 9.30 am. & arrived there at 10.40 am. I think it is the most beautiful station I have ever seen, lovely marble columns & statues everywhere, met Louis the guide, I am sending you his card, he charges 12½ francs & supplies you with two of the best meals. First we had dinner & set out around the city. We went through the big church here, we saw some of the best paintings in the world by Roubens on oak panels, his master piece "The Descent from the Cross" is absolutely marvelous, you expect the figures to step out of the picture. The great artists of the day declare it to be the best painting ever produced. The one picture itself is worth a fabulous sum, he gave it to the church, there are 3 by him in this church.

Then we went to the Cathedral it is the best in Belgium & France & has the finest collection of statuary, paintings & wood carving in the world. There are six of Roubens paintings & 4 of Van Dyks his most successful pupil, some artists say he equalled his master, there are other works by great artists, the woodcarving too is marvelous the expressions on the faces are very good, the

altar is of alibaster & marble with a great big painting by Roubens above it on the wall, the organ is one of the largest in the world, this cathedral contains more wealth than any building ever built, all the master painters, sculptors, architects, woodcarvers & organ constructors seem to have made it a collection for their master pieces, poor old Australia is out in the cold with her architecture & painting, it is like comparing the dirtiest hovel in the slums with St. Pauls Melb. or the Libry. Then we went to the Town Hall it is not as big as the Brussels one but is more valuable. One room there is considered the most valuable public owned room in the world, cieling & wall paintings by Roubens the only cieling painting he ever did, he was lying on a scaffold doing it, all the furniture & decorations are in oak wood carvings & has priceless Brussels carpets & curtains, also a beautiful lace table cover 800 years old. Then we went to the art gallery where they have an excellent collection of Roubens, Van Dyks & other prominent artists work, also a good collection of modern painters. From there we went to see the famous Antwerp docks there are 800 kilos of them altogether & are absolutly black with shipping, we saw where Fritz sunk a ship to try & block them up, but it was too deep, we also saw the huge grain elevators for shifting bulk grain from boats into trucks, it sucks it from the holds, cleans it & blows it into the trucks, the trains have to be moving all the time to keep up with it. They have got the plans ready for the underground railway in the city.

Then we went back for tea, eat our full & caught the train for Brussels at 6 pm., arrived at 7.15 pm. got our tickets from the YMCA & went straight to the Theatre Royal it starts at 7.30, most of the people are there at 5 pm but we had our seats booked. It is a magnificent building inside. I am not going to try & describe the scenery, it would be impossible, I will never forget the music & singing I heard that night, the orchestra was lovely, the singing was in Italian but was lovely, the opera lasted 5 hours & not one word was spoken, all singing. I don't know how they remember their parts, one girl sung for half an hour continuous, it must have been a terrible strain with the acting too. It was an old Roman opera, the scenery all through was marvelous. The King of the Arabs \* (at the end) who helped the Allies on Solonika & his son had a box in the opera that night, I had a look at him through a pair of opera glasses, he is a fine looking man. It finished at 12.30 am. we walked around town for a bit & went to bed after one of the most interesting days I have ever spent. Up again at 8.30 & caught the train for Waterloo (21 kilos) we saw the battle field where history was made so many years ago, & the farm where Napoleon was billeted, & Wellington's quarters & the farm where Wellington & Blucher met after the battle, we climbed the mound up 226 steps, you are just about fagged when you get to the top, but you get a good view of the battlefield, the guide pointed out the points of interest, then we went into the panorama it is a marvelous piece of work describing the battle at 6 oclock in the evening just as Blucher is arriving to join in the last charge. We got back home just in time for tea, after tea we booked our tickets for Chaleroi then went to the pictures. Next morning we caught the train for Chaleroi at 8.15 am. & arrived about 12 noon, caught another train for Beaumont at 5 pm. arrived at 7 pm & walked back to our billets. So ended our 5 days leave to Brussels, it cost us about



90 francs, a franc is 10 d. so you can work that out. I have some more letters to write, there were 4 letters waiting for me when we got back.

Well Mother dear I think that is all the news this time so I will close now with best of love to Dad, Don & yourself,

from your affectionate son

Will

Remember me kindly to all the Preston folk.

p.s. I had another parcel from Edinburg.

\* Reference to king of the Arabs, he was up to Paris for the peace conference & took a few days visit to Brussels.

No. 61661 Pte. W.F. McBeath

A Company

58 Battn.

I might be changing my address soon but will let you know later.

I am sending one of the leaves off Nurse Cavells grave what ever you do don't lose it."



For God, King and Empire.

**THE AUSTRALIAN Y.M.C.A.**

PATRONS:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL  
SIR R. MUNRO FERGUSON  
THE HON THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
SENATOR G. F. PEARCE



NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA  
ARMY AND NAVY DEPARTMENT  
ELIZABETH HOUSE,  
ELIZABETH STREET,  
MELBOURNE.

WITH THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES.

Reply to No

Coy

Batt

Brigade

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GRAVES DETACHMENT

#### WEEK TWENTYNINE - DRAFT TO GRAVES DETACHMENT

Monday, 17 March

Went with guide all round Brussels to all principle buildings, saw place where Nurse Cavell was shot.

Tuesday, 18 March

Caught 9.30 train for Antwerp, went with guide around city all through big buildings. Went to Theatre Royal, Brussels 7.30 pm.

Wednesday, 19 March

Caught train for Waterloo, saw over the battlefields, climbed to top of mound, went into panarama of battle. Went to pictures at night.

Thursday, 20 March

Caught train for Chaleroi 8.15 am. arrived 12 noon. Caught train for Lobbes 2 pm. Caught train for Beaumont 6.30 pm. Walked back to billets.

Friday, 21 March

A Company played C football. A won by 5 points. Draft examined for Australia.

Saturday, 22 March

Warned for draft with Graves Detachment.

Sunday, 23 March

Left Battn. Went to Beaumont in motor transport.

#### WEEK THIRTY - ON THE MOVE

Monday, 24 March

Left Beaumont 7 am. travelled by train to Marchenne & billeted there.

Tuesday, 25 March

Went & billeted in a private house, a lovely soft bed to sleep in

Wednesday, 26 March

Spent the day in Charleroi. Heavy fall of snow.

Thursday, 27 March

Went to pictures in Charleroi.

Friday, 28 March

Had a bath & clean change. Belgian soldier arrived home in house next door, had a great reception.

Saturday, 29 March

Big bike race in Charleroi won by A. Grenda (Australia) by 300 yds.

Sunday, 30 March

Had great fun snowballing.

#### WEEK THIRTYONE - VILLERS BRETTONEAUX

Monday, 31 March

Marching out parade, leaving here on Wednesday. Had my photo taken with two Belgian kiddies.

Tuesday, 1 April

Went into Charleroi. Nice warm day. APRIL FOOLS DAY.

Wednesday, 2 April

Marched from Marchienne to Charleroi, left in train 7 pm. travelling all night.

Thursday, 3 April

Arrived Mons 3.45 am. Stayed here 6 hours, went for a walk around the city. Left 9.45 am. arrived Arras 7 pm. Travelling all night.

Friday, 4 April

Passed Corbie 8.30 am. Arrived Villers Brettoneaux 9.30 am. Went for a walk & found Richie Nicholls grave.

Saturday, 5 April

Went for a walk into Corbie, a very nice town, not very much knocked about. Went to the tank dump & had a ride in one just arriving.

Note: No Sunday entry.

#### WEEK THIRTYTWO - FRENCH BOY - MILLS BOMB

Monday, 7 April

Went for a long walk into Dolhères & had a swim in the Somme canal.

Tuesday, 8 April

A French boy blew his two hands off fooling around with a Mills bomb.

Wednesday, 9 April

Australians played the Tommies soccer. Tommies won by 2 goals.

Thursday, 10 April

The chaps came across a plant of wine & champagne. 40 dozen bottles.

Friday, 11 April

Playing football.

Saturday, 12 April

On Corbie picquet.

Note: No Sunday entry.

#### WEEK THIRTYTHREE - GRAVE DIGGINGS

Monday, 14 April

Started work today, digging graves in cemetery, very hard ground.

Tuesday, 15 April

Working in the fields digging up the bodies, a very unpleasant job.

Wednesday, 16 April

In the fields. Found a grave with 18 men in it, no crosses, only 4 had identification on them.

Thursday, 17 April

Working in cemetery. An English lady came over to see her son's grave, found him lying in a bag & fainted.

Friday, 18 April

Holiday today. 5th divvy played 3 soccer, 5th won by 1 goal. YMCA started with the unit.

Saturday, 19 April

Working all day in cemetery, pretty well tired out. Had a big Aussie mail.

Sunday, 20 April

5th divvy played Tommies soccer, Tommies won. 5th divvy played 2nd football, 5th won by 8 goals.

LETTER DATED 19/4/19

"Dear Mother,

I hope this finds all at home in the best of health as it leaves me at present. I have not had any mail lately but I suppose my change of address has muddled it up a bit. Well we started work last Monday & I can not say I am exactly in love with the job, we do three days in the fields digging up the bodies, it is the easiest but I'd rather be in the cemetery digging the graves, it is terribly hard ground but it's a clean job. This week we have re buried 200 men, all day long we have representatives from the various allied armies around taking photos & particulars of the graves. We are doing Yanks, Tommies, Canadians, N.Zealanders & Aussies. The Yanks & Tommies are doing all round Ypres, Bullecourt & Perrone, so we won't be so long on the job.

Last Wednesday an English lady came here looking for her son's grave, she found out we were reburying him at the Adelaid cemetery, she went round after we'd knocked off & found him lying in a bag on the ground, there was a load just came in & we didn't have time to bury them, she fainted when she saw him & is in hospital suffering from shock, so English people are forbidden to travel in the battle areas now. I suppose you will see in the papers what good work we are doing & how smoothly the detachment is running, but although we've only been going a few weeks, we have had two strikes, we refused to work until we had better means for handling the bodies, had better food & cut out all ceremonial parades. You can not do a hard weeks work & then go & play parade ground soldiers. Now we get plenty of food, two comforts fund issues a week & they are trying to get a few shillings a week extra off the red cross for us.

Well Mother dear this is Easter Saturday & tomorrow I am 20 years old. I never thought last year that I would spend my next birthday in France. I only wish you could be over here with me to see some of the beautiful cities & sights, it is worth a fortune to see them & here we are being payed 6/- a day to see them. I will be getting my Amiens leave & if I can save enough money I am putting in for Paris leave instead of Blighty, they say that is a city nobody should miss seeing. I am sending you a few cards I bought in Corbie a few days ago, they have a good few shops going in that town now.

Well I think that is about all the news this time, so I will say Good Bye for the present, with fondest love to all,

From your loving son <sup>Will</sup>

No. 61661 Pte. W.F. McBeath  
No. 5 Company (58th Battn.)  
Aust. Graves Detachment  
Aust. Imp. Forces  
Abroad."

WEEK THIRTYFOUR - AMIENS LEAVE

Monday, 21 April (Easter Monday)

Holiday today. Had a game of cricket.

Tuesday, 22 April

Working in cemetery. Lecture on recapture of Villers Brettoneaux.

Wednesday, 23 April

Working in fields. Half holiday. Had a game of cricket. Applied for Amiens leave tomorrow.

Thursday, 24 April

Went on days leave to Amiens a very nice city. Beautiful cathedral.

Friday, 25 April

Anzac Day. Holiday. Sports. Royal Welsh Fusiliers band played.

Saturday, 26 April

Working in cemetery, started to rain, had a half holiday. moving pictures in YMCA. RCP

Sunday, 27 April

Anzac Memorial service. Royal Welsh Fusiliers played.

#### LETTER DATED 23/4/19

"Dear Mother,

I had a nice big mail yesterday 18 letters, three from you & 1 from Don. Thank you for the pound you & Auntie sent for my birthday, it came in very handy, I was waiting for pay day to go on my Amiens leave, but I will have enough to go tomorrow now, I have just got my pass, they gave me 26 francs for the £1. My word you must have had the flue very bad over there, I hope you do not catch it again. I know what it feels like. The bush fires must have been very bad too, they played havoc with the timber in Beech Forest I suppose, I think fires like that must be nearly as bad as a small war. I am sending those clippings to Miss Kerrs to read. I did not spend a bad birthday, it was on Easter Sunday, our division played the Tommies soccer in the afternoon & after tea we played the 3rd divvy Australian rules, I was playing, we won by 6 goals. Cricket is getting a go on again. We have got a very nice old padre in this unit, he has started a YMCA & is running it himself. He has also started a photographic club & a concert party. He is pretty rough, not like the usual religious man, he is not above salvaging or pinching things for the YM, it was funny one day, he got two waggon loads of forms, he fixed them up in the YM, a few hours later around lined two Froggies after their furniture; they saw them in the YM & started blagarding the padre in French, but he quietened them with a few francs & parted in the best of friendship. I think they have got the roughest lot of officers they could find in the AIF with this unit & by jove they want them, it is the roughest mob I have ever seen, they would just as soon down tools as not. We are getting on pretty well with our job though, about 400 bodies in so far, one cemetery is full up, we will be putting them in the cemetery where Richie Nicholls is buried next.

I am living pretty close just now I am saving up for my Paris leave, I will take that instead of Blighty you can do it on £9. Venice (Italy) leave is open now, but that would cost too much, £13 or so, the cobbler has sent home for £20, I'm blown if I'm going to though, I'd rather have it when I get home, although we will never get another chance of seeing these cities, Paris will have to do me, I might be able to stand a trip to Cologne.

Well Mother I think that is all I can write this time as I have to clean up a bit for Amiens tomorrow so Goodbye for the present, with fondest love to all

from your loving son  
Will"

#### WEEK THIRTYFIVE - SNOW & RAIN - NO WORK

Monday, 28 April

Raining & snowing all day, no work. Euchre tournament in YMCA.

Tuesday, 29 April

Working on Aubigny sector. Splendid lecture by Major Mott on "My escape from Germany".

Wednesday, 30 April

On Corbie picquet. Raining all day, no work. Concert in YMCA by No. 3 Coy.

Thursday, 1 May

No work, still raining. Walked into Warfusse. Bridge tournament, quoit competition & pictures in YMCA.

Friday, 2 May

Working on Hamel sector. Struck a shell hole with 12 men buried in it, a dreadful mess. Debate on affect of the war on the digger in YMCA.

Saturday, 3 May

Working around Aubigny & Hamel. Concert in YMCA.

Sunday, 4 May

Church parade. Went for walk into Corbie.

#### WEEK THIRTYSIX - FIELDS & CEMETERY WORK

Monday, 5 May

Working in fields. Playing football after tea.

Tuesday, 6 May

Working in Crucifix corner cemetery. 5th divvy played 3rd cricket, 5th won by 38 runs.

Wednesday, 7 May

Working on Warfusse sector. Concert & lecture in YMCA.

Thursday, 8 May

Working at Warfusse, 900 bodies reburied up to date. A new RC padre joined the unit.

Friday, 9 May

New YMCA opened in big tent. Went down to the Somme canal for a swim.

Saturday, 10 May

Went on sick parade, feeling very rotten.

Sunday, 11 May

Memorial service & closing of Adelaide cemetery.

#### WEEK THIRTYSEVEN - WORKING IN CEMETERY

Monday, 12 May

Working on Hamel sector. Fritzes erecting a big marquee for picture shows.

Tuesday, 13 May

Pictures started in YMCA. No. 2 Company moved out to Albert. Big explosion of munition dump near Amiens.

Wednesday, 14 May

Working on Hamel sector. Struck a cemetery of Yanks & French. Concert in YMCA by No. 2 company. No. 4 company moved out.

Thursday, 15 May

Working at Hamlet. Moved into No. 4 companies billets. Pictures in YMCA.

Friday, 16 May

Working in Cachy sector. Concert in YMCA.

Saturday, 17 May

On guard. No. 1 company moved out to Morlencourt. Monument in memory of Aust. Corps commenced opposite Chalk Pits cemetery. Pictures in YMCA.

#### LETTER DATED 13/5/19

"Dear Mother, I recieved that lovely parcel & two long letters from you this week, the parcel was "tres bon", I recognized the old box at once. I was just wanting bootlaces & a thin pair of socks as I have just got a new pair of boots & they are a trifle small, the rasins & milk were a treat, also the Preston "rags" they were the first I have had, it is hardly worth while sending newspapers by themselves as they never reach here now.

We are having lovely weather here at last all the forests are gradually turning from brown to green, & the swallows are coming around, they have got a nest in our billet, evry morning they make a terrible row until we open the door. Evry Sunday & Wednesday afternoon we go over to Corbie for a swim in the Somme canal, it is a beautiful stream for swimming. Cricket is in full swing now I am playing with the company team. The YMCA is well established with this unit now, they have erected two enormous tents, one for pictures. You can get free cocoa & buns, books & all indoor games, the pictures are full sized & a change of programe 3 times weekly, so we have plenty to pass our time after work. Our rations are excellent & evry week we get 2 tins of cocoa & milk, 1 pair of socks or a shirt & we have a spare suit of clothes to work in. Last Sunday we had a memorial service & closing down of the Adelaid British cemetery, there are 450 graves in it now, Crufix Corner cemetery is nearly full too it has 500 graves so far. You would hardly think there were so many graves in the fields, still there are hundreds to come in yet. Our C.O. the other day, guaranteed us that we would all be home for Xmas. Half a dozen tanks went through here last week on their way from Corbie into Amiens, I had a ride in one for half a mile, it terribly hot inside & you can not hear your self speak, I would not like to go into action in one. That is the second tank I have had a ride in. There was a terrible accident here the other day, a lady & gent were driving along in a cart, the horse shied at a motor, the wheel went over the nose cap of a 9.2 in. shell & sent it off, the whole show was blown to pieces, parts of the cart landed near our billet, the two people & horse were killed & a piece of shell hit a girl in the leg & nearly took it off.

I am sending a few more views of Brussels & Antwerp or "Anvers" & some of the cobbers snaps. No. 1 is the Palace of

Justice, Brussels, No. 2 is the Museum, Brussels, No. 3 is a panorama taken from the Column of Congress, Brussels, No. 4 is the Cathedral at Antwerp, No. 5 is the Lion & Mound at Waterloo, No. 6 is one of the Belgian kiddies where I was staying at Marchienne, No. 7 is rebuilding one of the blown up bridges between Valincies & Arras, No. 8 is a typical wind mill out of Mons a bit, No. 9 is a canal at Charleroi, No. 10 is the church at Doulers, No. 11 is the headquarters chatteau at Doulers.

Well Mother dear I think that is all the news this time. So I must close now with love to all from

Your loving son,  
Will"

#### WEEK THIRTYEIGHT - WORKING IN CEMETERY

Monday, 19 to Wednesday 21 May  
Working in cemetery.

Thursday 22 to Saturday 24 May  
Working in fields.

#### WEEK THIRTYNINE - WORKING IN CEMETERY

Monday, 26 May  
Cleaning up Adelaïd cemetery. Pictures. Playing tennis.

Tuesday, 27 May  
Working in cemetery.

Wednesday, 28 May  
Half holiday. Played the Tommies cricket & were beaten by 19 runs.

Thursday, 29 to Saturday 31 May  
Working in cemetery.

Sunday, 1 June  
Swimming in the canal.

#### WEEK FORTY - BILLY HUGHES VISIT

Monday 2 to Wednesday 4 June  
Working in cemetery.

Tuesday, 5 June  
Billy Hughes visited us.

Friday, 6 June  
Went down to small cemetery near Amiens to clean it up.

Saturday, 7 June  
On Picquet.

Sunday, 8 June  
Swimming in canal.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PARIS LEAVE

#### WEEK FORTYONE - PARIS LEAVE

Monday, 9 June

Holiday. King's Birthday. Playing tennis.

Tuesday, 10 June

Working in cemetery.

Wednesday, 11 June

Working in cemetery.

Thursday, 12 June

Working in cemetery. Paris leave tomorrow.

Friday, 13 June

Got our passes for Paris, went up to Boulogne for money. Caught express from Amiens arrived Boulogne 2.10 pm. Caught Paris train 10.30 pm.

Saturday, 14 June

Repassed Amiens 2 am. arrived Paris 7.30 am. Went with guide to Versailles, saw Hall of Mirrors where peace is to be signed. Went to the grand Opera at night.

Sunday, 15 June

Climbed to top of Triumphal Arch. Went for trip on Sienne.

#### WEEK FORTYTWO - PARIS

Monday, 16 June

Walked around on our own, went through the Art Galleries & to the Olimpia Theatre at night.

Tuesday, 17 June

Went with guide around Paris to the Trocadero, around the Great Wheel, through the Invalids (Napoleon's Tomb). Went to the Follies Bergere at night.

Wednesday, 18 June

Caught train to St. Germain a very pretty place, Austrian peace delegates staying there. Afternoon went up the Eiffel Tower & into the War Panoramic picture.

Thursday, 19 June

Stayed at the hotel in the morning. after dinner went for a tram ride into Versailles again. Went to the Alhambra Theatre at night.

Friday, 20 June

Went for trip around Paris to Hotel de Ville, Notre Dame. Cluny Museum, Police Station & Luxemburg gardens. Went to the Casino theatre at night.

Saturday, 21 June

Walked around Paris. Went through the Louvre museum & art galleries, finest in the world. Went to the Olimpia theatre at night.

Sunday, 22 June

Left Paris 1.15 pm. Arrived Amiens 5 pm. Arrived Villers Brettoneaux 9 pm.

## WEEK FORTYTHREE - WORKING IN CEMETERY

Monday, 23 June  
On guard.

Tuesday, 24 to Saturday 28 June  
Working in cemetery.

### LETTER DATED 23/6/19

"Dear Mother,

A few lines to let you know I am in the best of health as I hope this finds you. Well I have been to gay Paris & all I can say is it is wonderful. London can not be compared with it, & Melbourne is like the smallest of bush towns compared with it, wishing that dear old place no harm.

To start from the beginning, about 10.30 pm on the Thursday night, the clerk told us we were going to Paris in the morning so I had to get out of bed & pack up a few things. When we went round to BHQ in the morning to get our passes we found they had no money for us, so we had to bluff our way through to Bologne the only Australian pay office in France now. After fooling around a lot we reached Amiens in time to catch the 11.15 am Bologne express, it is a lovely train running right through with only one stop at Abbeyville, passed Etapps 1.30 pm & arrived at Bologne 2.10 pm. We found the pay office & drew our money alright, then went for a walk around the city. It is a big fishing town & like most fishing centers, smells very high in places, but on the whole is not a bad place, the esplanade is very fine, the electric tram runs along it for 3 or four miles. We caught the 10.30 pm. train for Paris, repassed Etapps 12.30, stopped at Abbeyville 1.15 am. & Amiens 2 am., exactly 15 hours after leaving there the day before.

We arrived at Paris about 7.30 am. Saturday morning. I do not know how a cuntry chap feels when he visits a city but I think I must have felt like one for my first few hours in Paris, such a conglomeration of Taxies, buses, trams & people. The tube & tramway strikes made the traffic worse, the French cavalry were patrolling the streets in case of riots from the strikers, evry tube enterance had a guard on it. The first thing to do was to find the Provost Marshall after a good deal of wandering around we succeeded & got our passes stamped back a day for the time we were travelling up to Boulogne & back. Then we found the Hotel Florida had some breakfast & booked a bed. After breakfast we went with one of the guides to Versailles, the party consisted of 3 or 4 Australian YMCA girls, 4 Australian sisters (on leave from Salonica) some WAAAAC's & Tommy Canadian & Aussey soldiers, after we had been out on a few excursions we all knew each other & had quite an enjoyable time. At Versailles we saw all over the Louis XIV palace, it is a magnificent place, the Hall of Mirrors where peace is to be signed in a few days, is just being prepared for that great event; the mate took a snap of it, the day after we were there it was closed, the gardens around the palace are very fine & cover 30 acres with huge fountains, fish ponds & statuary evrywhere. Caught the train back to Paris. After tea we all went to the Opera House the largest & most beautiful in the world, it was built on top of a river, underneath the stage are huge vaults they manufacture all their scenery now, this one is larger than the one at Brussels but does not hold as many people. The opera was entitled "The Damnation of Faust"; the music was like, well it was like nothing I had ever heard before it is unexplainable, kind of sent shivers up your spine, the orchestra

consisted of 58 instruments including 20 violins & cellos & 3 base vios, it finished at 1.15 am, so ended our first day in Paris.

Sunday morning we did not get up till 9.45 am. had breakfast & went for a stroll around Paris, the strikes were settled Sunday so things were normal, we climbed to the top of the Triumphal Arch, from where you get a lovely view of boulevards & avenues running out from the arch. This arch has only been opened since the Armistice; ever since the Germans marched through there in victory years ago, it has been closed, France vowed that it would never be opened until that defeat was avenged. After dinner our little party met & went for a pleasure trip on the Seine, I have never seen such a number or variety of bridges, nearly evry 100 yds. there is a bridge, we went upstream as far as where the Marne joins the Seine then back again to St. Cloud right through the heart of the city, it was a trip I would never have missed. We got off at St. Cloud it is a nice place, just like a huge park with beautiful fountains & marble archways in all sorts of quiet corners. The fountains are all running for a few hours on Sunday afternoon. I think nothing looks as pretty as a big fountain playing with the sun shining on it. We missed the boat back so had to catch a tram, when we got to Paris all the fountains were running there, the ones in the Place Le Concord looked especially well, the mate took a snap of one. Later in the afternoon we strolled through the gardens of the Lowre, they call this gay Paree & it is true, you could not imagine the crowds, the blaze of color & the costumes, they were simply grand, you would think evry one was a millionaire, brass & string bands were playing all day & fountains playing, all that combined with the perfect weather made it a scene worth remembering. After tea we were walking around again, Paris looks quite as good if not better at night, in fact there seems to be no night, it is like daylight right up to 3 am, we were staying on the main boulevard & can see from our window.

Monday we went out on our own & saw through the small Art Gallerys & Museum. After tea we went with the party to the Olimpia Theatre where there was a very good variety show. Tuesday we went with the party on a tour round Paris, into the Trocedro a huge university for music, it is only used when some special star of the world is giving an entertainment it holds some thousands of people, then we went on the Big Wheel it is an enormous structure 340 ft. high. We saw the Invalids (Napoleons Tomb) it is a beautiful building, the back portion is a huge museum of old armury used by the Knights & Kings of old, another part is a museum for this war, they have several flags taken from Fritz in 1914, all sorts of bombs etc. & some very good war paintings. After tea we went to the Follies Bergers, it is a very flash place, one half of it is a big restraunt & lounge where you promenade between the acts, they have fountains working inside & statues & ferns evrywhere, string bands play during the intervals, the show was excellent. Wednesday morning we caught the train to St. Germain a very pretty orchard district about 20 miles out. It is here where the Austrian peace delegates are staying, they have part of the gardens roped off for their use. We got back to Paris for dinner, after that went to the top of the Eiffel Tower 970 ft. high, you go up in 4 different lifts, each getting smaller, the view from the top is magnificent, the

Big Wheel looks like a toy hoop, & the river Seine which passes the foot of the tower looks like a small stream, the 4 foundations cover 3 acres, I think it is a greater piece of work than the Forth Bridge. After that we went around to the big panoramic war picture, it is very fine & represents all the different heads & troops of the Allied nations & the battles they were in, 20 artists painted this picture which contains some thousands of portraits. After tea we walked over to the island city or old Paris, where the river divides for a kilo or so. Thursday morning we stayed home & had a rest, after dinner we went for a tram ride out to Versailles again & after tea to the Alhambra Theatre. Friday we went with the party on a trip round the old Paris through the Hotel De Ville or Town Hall, & Notre Dame cathedral, Antwerp & Brussels beat Paris in the way of cathedrals. Then went through the Cluny Museum & Police Station, then through the Luxemburg gardens they are very pretty indeed. We went to the Casino at night, it is the second best show in Paris, the show of dresses there was beautiful & must have cost a mint of money, none of these cheap things they generally have for the stage but real silk. Saturday, well this was our last day in Paris so we decided to wander around on our own. First we went to the Louvre museum & art galleries, where we spent 5 hrs., you could spend weeks there & not see it all, they have got the largest & finest collection of paintings & antiques I have ever seen. There is one gallery of Rouben's pictures alone, three times as long as the Preston shire hall, that is only one gallery of dozens. The statuary galleries are very fine too, by this time it was tea time, we went to the Olimpia Theatre again after tea. Sunday morning we got up in time to miss the 9.30 am train for Amiens, so had to wait till 1.15 pm for another, we were off at last, we said goodbye to gay Paree for good I suppose, but the memory of it will live for ever, it is a place nobody should miss seeing over this side. We reached Amiens at 5 pm after a very slow journey up in a passenger train stopping at all stations. We could not get a train out to Villers Bretonneaux till 8.30 pm as there was a smash on the line. The next morning I struck guard, so I came back to earth with a thud. That night on guard there was a rumour that peace was signed, flares were going up, all the bells & whistles in Corbie were ringing & when the wind blew strong you could hear the big bells at the Amiens cathedral chiming away, it was a false alarm, but it passed time on guard well. We are working in the Chalk Pits cemetery now.

Well Mother I think that is all the news this time, remember me kindly to Mrs. Tierney, Mrs. Rofo & all the folk, from your loving son,

Will XXXXXX

I am putting a few cards in with yours for Vera & Don (Will)  
How are the fowls laying now?"

#### WEEK FORTYFOUR - BODIES ARRIVING

Monday, 1 July

Working in Chalk Pits cemetery.

Tuesday, 2 July

Working in cemetery. First load of bodies came in from 4th division at Pioyert (?).

Wednesday, 3 July

Heavy shower of rain. No work. Played cards instead.

Thursday, 4 July

More bodies coming in.

Friday, 5 July

A large building, partly destroyed collapsed, owing to the concussion from a dump going up.

Saturday, 6 July

Working in cemetery, getting well used to pick & shovel work now.

Sunday, 7 July

No. 5 Coy played 3rd English Army Hdqs cricket. No. 5 won by 48 runs.

#### WEEK FORTYFIVE - PRESIDENT POINARE VISIT

Monday, 8 July

Working in cemetery. Pay day. Playing cricket after tea.

Tuesday, 9 July

Working in morning, raining after dinner, no work. Wrote letters

Wednesday, 10 July

Working in cemetery. Half holiday. No. 5 Coy V No. 3 cricket. 3 Coy won by 32 runs. Tennis court finished reparation.

Thursday, 11 July

Three loads of bodies came in from Warfusie.

Friday, 12 July

Working in cemetery.

Saturday, 13 July

Days leave to Amiens. Place all decorated up for welcome of President Poinare tomorrow & French peace celebrations.

Monday, 14 July

25 men went into Amiens for guard of Honor to President Poinare.

#### WEEK FORTYSIX - PEACE CELEBRATIONS

Monday, 15 July

French peace celebrations. People of Villers Bretonneux presented us with a memorial to the Australians. Memorial service in afternoon at Crucifix Corner cemetery. Great day in Paris.

Tuesday, 16 July

Working in cemetery.

Wednesday, 17 July

In cemetery. Half holiday. Played cricket.

Thursday, 18 July

Working in cemetery, plenty of bodies coming in.

Friday, 19 July  
Raining all day, no work.

Saturday, 20 July  
British peace celebrations, no work, played cricket, free beer.  
Ball in school room, German orchestra, finished 1 am. Great day  
in London.

Sunday, 21 July  
Went out mushrooming, got a lot & fried them.

#### WEEK FORTYSEVEN - WORKING IN CEMETERY

Monday, 22 July  
Working in cemetery.

Tuesday, 23 July  
Started to shift the small Chalk Pits cemetery. I took up Richie  
Nicholls body.

Wednesday, 24 July  
Got all the bodies out of the small cemetery across into the big  
one. Half holiday.

Thursday, 25 July  
Raining, no work. Did a lot of washing. Souvineered a lot of  
spuds & fried them.

Friday, 26 July  
Raining. Half holiday. Played cricket.

Saturday, 27 July  
No. 5 Coy played 3 army hqs. cricket at Flexicourt & were beaten  
by 79 runs.

Sunday, 28 July  
Clemenco the French premier visited this town.

#### WEEK FORTYEIGHT - SOLDIERS CLUB

Monday, 29 July  
On sick parade. Got some mushrooms.

Tuesday, 30 July  
Working in fields near Cachy.

Wednesday, 31 July  
Working in Monument Wood.

Thursday, 1 August  
Miss Wrouth the NZ lady arrived here & started a soldiers club  
next to our billet.

Friday, 2 August  
No work. 100 men went into Amiens on guard of honor to General  
Birdwood.

Saturday, 3 August  
On guard.

Sunday, 4 August  
Went for a walk in to Warfusse.

# WEEK FORTYNINE - AUSTRAL BRITISH CEMETERY

Monday, 5 August

Started digging up the bodies in Austral British cemetery, on the Amiens row. 120 bodies there.

Tuesday, 6 August

Working in Austral cemetery, shifted 50 bodies.

Wednesday, 7 August

Half holiday. Played cricket.

Thursday, 8 August

Finished off Austral cemetery.

Friday, 9 August

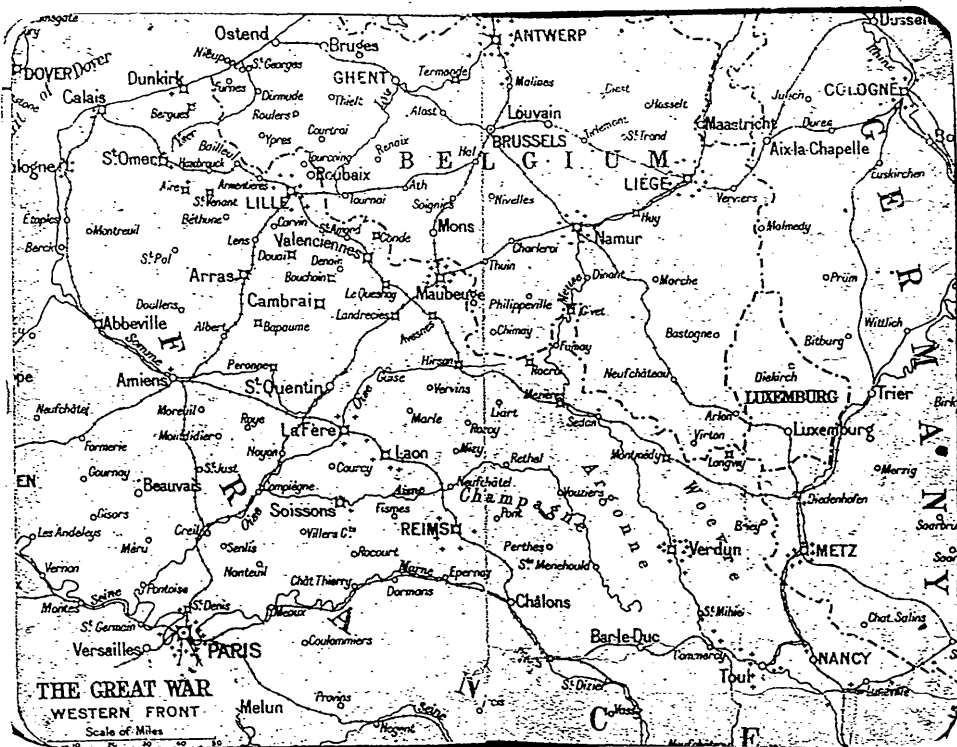
Big Chalk Pits cemetery nearly finished.

Saturday, 10 August

No work. Tennis tournament started.

Sunday, 11 August

Swimming in canal.



MAP FROM A.C.F. DIARY  
SHOWING SOME OF THE AREA  
THAT WILL WORKED AND TRAVELLED

## CHAPTER SIX

### LAST LEAVE

#### WEEK FIFTY - COMPANIES LEAVING

Monday, 12 August

Working in cemetery.

Tuesday, 13 August

No work. 3 of No. 1 company badly injured with a bomb.

Wednesday, 14 August

Tennis tournament finished, won by the Doctor & a motor transport driver.

Thursday, 15 August

Working in cemetery.

Friday, 16 August

No. 1 company 1st div. left here for England.

Saturday, 17 August

No. 2 company left for England.

Sunday, 18 August

No. 3 company left.

#### WEEK FIFTYONE - RETURN TO ENGLAND

Monday, 19 August

No. 4 company left. All getting ready to leave tomorrow.

Tuesday, 20 August

Left Villers Bretonneux 2 pm. arrived Amiens 3, left at 5 pm. Arrived Abbeyville 8 pm stayed 3 hrs., travelling all night.

Wednesday, 21 August

Passed Rowen 9 am. Arrived Le Havre 10.30 am marched out to camp. Had a steam bath & change.

Thursday, 22 August

Still at Le Havre. Handed in equipment. Changed tunic & breeches.

Friday, 23 August

At Le Havre, leaving tomorrow.

Saturday, 24 August

Left camp 1 pm caught boat for South Hampton 4 pm. Arrived 11 pm, anchored all night.

Sunday, 25 August

Landed at 8 am. Stayed at Sth. Hampton 3 hrs. Caught train to Sutton Veny.

#### WEEK FIFTYTWO - LEAVE - ABERDEEN

Monday, 26 August

In camp at Sutton Veny. Issued with kit bags & change of clothing.

Tuesday, 27 August

Went into Warminster.

Wednesday, 28 August

Getting ready for leave tomorrow.



Thursday, 29 August

Left Sutton Veny 10.30 am, arrived Paddington stn. 1.30 pm. Went through Australia House & Houses of Parliament. Caught 1 pm train for Aberdeen. Passed Newcastle 1.30 am.

Friday, 30 August

Arrived Edinburg 4.15 am. crossed Forth Bridge, crossed Tay Bridge. Arrived Dundee 7.15 am. arrived Aberdeen 8.30 am. Booked beds & went around the city. a very nice but dear place. Nice beach.

No more diary entries were made from this time.



LETTER FROM AGGIE A. C. KERR

15 Graham Street,  
Edinburgh 23rd Nov., 1919.

My Dear Will,

Very many thanks for your two letters which arrived both together. You seem to have had a good time on board, you would get a good bath when you fell from the pole. Rachel saw the notice in the papers that your ship had arrived at Melbourne, such rejoicings there would be when you landed. Your Mother would be delighted to see you back again. We suppose some of the Leith ones would be meeting you. We had such a nice long letter from Rita, she wrote it just after she was better from the flue. We have only seen Mary & Laura once since you left and I have never seen their father & mother at all. I meant to have written before so as you would get the enclosed for Christmas but they were late in coming, but better late than never and we hope you will like it. You never said how you liked the snapshot I sent to you before you sailed for Australia. Mr. & Mrs. Jamieson and Miss Blackie at Trinity desired to be remembered to you. Jim Jamieson that is the one who was a prisoner in Germany has been home again for a few weeks, but he left on Thursday for Burmah, India where he has signed on for three years with the Burmah Oil Company. You were wondering if we were any cooler than you were when you wrote, the cold was something fierce when your letter came, the snow was about one foot in some places, it was a great thought and effort to leave the fireplace, it certainly was very healthy weather, it is quite a change now, it's close and damp.

Our brother from Manchester was here when your letters came so he heard all the news about you. I shouldn't have liked to be on board that soldiers family boat if all these 300 babies started crying, there would be some music if they did. Meg is away in Berwickshire at a case just now, she is at a farm house and the last letter we had she could hardly get across the door as the snow was so deep & the roads blocked, she doesn't like the country in the winter. Rachel is kept very busy at the office just now, her Master isn't well at all just now, he has got the jaundice and we are afraid it is a general breaking up. Tommey (?) is all night and here every day as usual, she sends her love and best wishes to you. I wrote to Rita the other week it's usually Rachel that writes to them but I said I would take a turn at writing.

We had an Australian gentleman seeing us since you were here, he was a friend of our brothers in Essendon, his name was Mr. Jolly and I believe he lives at Moonie Ponds, we liked him very much and felt quite at home with him.

Now Will don't you go and tell your Father & Mother that Edinburgh is not bad at all, but tell them that it is very beautiful. Now I think that is all this time so will close. With much love to your Father & Mother and a double lot to yourself and all good wishes for Christmas and New Year in which Meg & Rachel join me.

Ever your loving Aunt

Aggie A. C. Kerr

## INSCRIPTIONS, NAMES AND WRITINGS FROM THE DIARIES

The inscription which is in the front of the "Australian Portable Diary" 1918 is as follows:

"To Mr. William McBeath Jnr.

Please accept as a little remembrance on the occasion of your enlistment June 1918 with very best wishes for future

Edith L. Rofe"

### CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS OF SERVICE

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| ENLISTED     | 24.6.18  |
| CAMP         | 4.7.18   |
| LEFT AUSSIE  | 31.8.18  |
| DURBAN       | 29.9.18  |
| CAPE TOWN    | 6.10.18  |
| SIERRA LEONE | 20.10.18 |
| LONDON       | 14.11.18 |
| EDINBURGH    | 6.12.18  |
| Le HAVRE     | 24.1.19  |
| CHARLEROI    | 30.1.19  |
| BRUSSELS     | 19.3.19  |
| ANTWERP      | 21.3.19  |
| WATERLOO     | 22.3.19  |
| PARIS        | 22.6.19  |
| VERSAILLES   | 24.6.19  |
| ST. GERMAIN  | 26.6.19  |
| ST. CLOUD    | 23.6.19  |
| DUNDEE       | 28.8.19  |
| ABERDEEN     | 30.8.19  |
| DUNBAR       | 8.9.19   |
| NTH. BERLIT  | 9.9.19   |
| CAPE TOWN    | 11.10.19 |
| ADELAIDE     | 10.11.19 |

### BOYS OF NO. 9 MESS "BARAMLAH"

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Cpl. WALDON   | Pte. BIGGS   |
| Pte. PRETTY   | Pte. BRIDGES |
| Pte. MILLAR   | Pte. BRIDGES |
| Pte. SMITH    | Pte. BOLTON  |
| Pte. ALLINSON | Pte. DENWAN  |
| Pte. BELL     | Pte. McBEATH |

### CAMPS AND PLACES OF BILLETS

No. 2 PARKHOUSE, SAILSBURY, 16th Nov. 18. No. 6 CAMP 14th HURDCOTT, SAILSBURY, 15th Dec. 18. No. 2 CAMP ABBEMONT, FRANCE 24.1.19.

BILLETED: BEAUMONT, BELGIUM 27.1.19, DURLERS, FRANCE, 1.2.19. SARS POTTERIES, FRANCE 11.3.19. CHIVERY, BELGIUM, 12.3.19. Sobre St. George, BARBENCON, BELGIUM, 13.2.19. WALCOURT, MARCHIENNE, CHARLEROI, CORBIE, MONS, ARRA S, VILLERS BRETONNEUX, HAMLET, WARFUSTIE, PARIS, VERSAILLES, ST. GERMAIN, ST. CLOUD, BOLOGNE, ABBEYVILLE, CACHY, BLANSHY, HAMMEL, BRUSSELS, ANTWERP, WATERLOO.

## NAMES AND ADDRESSES

MR. JABEZ BENNET,  
367 Stockport Rd. Gu Cross, Hyde, Cheshire, England.

STEAVENS, D. MISS  
"Fairholme" Fairview Rd. Chilwell Row, Essex.

MISS E.E. TITMUS,  
43 Mansfield Rd., S. Croydon, Surrey.

No. 2278, 2nd AIR MECHANIC F.C. WEICHARDT,  
Australian Flying Corps.

MR. W.J. BIRD,  
Garfield Cottage, Wells Rd., Madstock, Somersetshire, England.

MR. G.V. KERR,  
"Craigmillar", Hazel Grove, Norbury Moor, Cheshire, England.

MISS KERR,  
15 Graham St., Edinburgh, Scotland, "Lauriston Place".

3959 23rd BATT. B. COY. PTE. G.E. WALSH Mickie

No. 3614 PTE. F.J. WILLIAMS, 60th BATTALION

MR. J.A. BULLOCK,  
New Shelburne Prd. Calne Wiltshire.

MRS. F. PENNY,  
Alma Place, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.

MISS UPHAM,  
Pitminster P.O., Nr. Taunton, Somerset.

MR. JOHN UPHAM,  
1 Daffords Place, St. Saviours Road, Lark Hall, Bath, Somerset.

PTE. H.M. ROCHE No. 5402,  
Dental Sta 66, AIF, No. 2 Command Depot, Mont Vied's, Weymouth, England.

51187 PTE. LAURENCE A. ROCHE, AAAMC STAFF,  
Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, Salisbury, England.  
Late of D. Company 57 Batt.

MR. JACK FULCHER,  
HMAS Melbourne, C/o GPO London.

MONSEUR Le PANE,  
15 Rue de Voi, Charleroi, Belgium.

MESSRS. FOX BROS. WOOLEN MERCHANTS,  
Wellington, Somerset, England.  
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## PROVERBS AND VERSE

A wise old owl sat on an oak,  
The more he saw the less he spoke.  
The less he spoke the more he heard,  
So take a lesson from this wise old bird.

Everyone to their liking, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow.

No rose without a thorn.

Hell is paved with good intentions.

In a calm sea every man is a pilot.

Life however rosy, must be fed.

The Scotchman likes his whiskey,  
The Irishman likes it hot.  
The Aussey has no national drink  
HE DRINKS THE BALLY LOT.

1914 War predicted short in  
1915 clouds not lifting  
1916 War seems fixed in  
1917 fighting largely Leavantine  
1918 Foe capitulating  
1919 No more fighting  
1920 My newspaper's empty.  
Please can we have some more war.

Forget me not I only ask  
This simple boon of thee  
And may it be a simple task  
Sometimes to think of me.

Though distant seas divide us  
At night I think of thee  
How far away thou art  
Yet always dear to me.  
Tis hard!

When late you asked me what is bliss  
As at your feet entranced I lay,  
My answer then was but a kiss.  
But now I have found words to say,  
There is no bliss on earth so sweet  
As that which comes when lovers meet.  
And charms like thine have twice the power  
O'er my fond heart in that sweet hour.  
Yes, it my dear is bliss to me  
To love and be beloved by thee.  
To meet thee in the twilight hour  
And loiter in thy native bower  
When mantling shade from mortal ken  
Has hid us oft and will again.

Somewhere a woman, Mother, sweetheart or wife  
Waits betwixt hopes and fears for your return.  
Her kiss, her words will cheer you in the strife  
When death itself confronts you grim and stern.  
But let her image all your reverence claim  
When base temptations scorch you with their flame.

Somewhere a woman watches thrilled with pride  
Shrined in her heart you share a place with none.  
She toils, she waits, she prays till side by side  
You stand together when the battle's done.  
Oh keep for her dear sake a stainless name,  
Bring back to her a manhood free from stain.

When the last barrage has lifted  
And the dawn of the right break through  
And back we tra il to the bushland,  
We will drink dear pals to you.  
We will drink a toast to our comrades,  
Who fought with us side by side,  
And fell ere the barrage lifted,  
And the lust of battle died.

I'm a noble Anzac warrior & I crave a little squeal  
On a matter that concerns me, and on which I strongly feel.  
It has got me thinking deeply & it always me astounds,  
When I see that flaming notice to us swaddies "Out of Bounds".

I have seen it in the tram cars, I have seen it in the trains  
And I've bumped it in the meadows & the pretty English lanes.  
I have spotted it on beaches & on various public grounds,  
And I've stopped at concerts gaping at that signboard "Out of Bounds".

Once I had a dainty lady one of Britains fairest pets  
And we loved each other madly as they say in novelets,  
Her dear mother rakes the cash in at the cosy "Hare & Hounds"  
But they've parted us forever for they've marked it "Out of Bounds".

I've been doing Picadilly when the days been wet & cold.  
And I've found a cheerful parlour where my favourite whisky's sold.  
I have named it with a shiver, drew my wallet full of pounds,  
But they've offered cloves & cider for the whisky's "Out of Bounds".

Should a German shell or bullet land me at the Golden Gate  
Where I'll stand at ease to Peter while he sums up re my fate,  
I'm expecting him to mutter when the enter trumpet sounds,  
"Get across the road there digger, Paradise is 'Out of Bounds'".

These were all hand written in the back of diaries by Will.

EXTRACT FROM DIARY

A.I.F.

AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND

GIFT DIARY 1919

Containing useful information for  
Australian Soldiers

The Funds' Objects

"To do all the good we can,  
In all the ways we can,  
In all the places we can,  
In any emergency arising  
from the War."



FOREWORD

This Note Book and Diary for 1919 is issued to members of the A.I.F., as a gift from the Australian Comforts Fund.

This Fund was established to distribute the gifts provided by the Australian public through the various State organisations. In the early days of the war the Australian public determined that those who remained should also serve, and endeavour by means of the Comforts to relieve, as far as possible, the privations inseparable from active service, and to maintain in close association with those Sons, Husbands and Fathers who answered the call to patriotism.

In this fifth year we find no falling off in the stream of comforts that carry the atmosphere of Australia to wherever her Sons are fighting, bearing a message of love and grateful thanks.

Attention is drawn to the Australian section at the back of the Diary; it is hoped that the information given will prove interesting and useful.

The six pointed star adopted by the Australian Comforts Fund as their emblem represents the six States comprising the Australian Commonwealth, viz. Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania.



## EPILOGUE

After returning to Australia, Will was apprenticed (in those days known as a journeyman) to Kellow Fawkners as a coachbuilder. He later worked with his brother Don, who was a builder.

In 1924 he married Ivy Upham from Bundoora and at that time from Melbourne University where her father James Upham was the curator of the university gardens. Ivy and Will had kept up a correspondence whilst Will was away at the war. He built their home at 16 McIvor Street, Preston. Will and Ivy had three children, Allan, Norma and Jim. During the depression years when work was hard to come by, he travelled to various country towns to work. He also rode his bicycle loaded with his tools of trade from Preston to Warrandyte and Warburton and back daily for some time while he had work there.

During the 1939 - 1945 War he was conscripted into the Civil Construction Corps and was sent up to North Queensland to Proserpine, Tolga, Atherton, Townsville and Horne Island.

After 1945 he worked as a sub-contractor builder with his brother Don and Bill Clarke of Preston. He was a keen worker for the 4th Preston Scout Group in his spare time.

On the way home from work on 8th October, 1953, Will called at his Doctor's surgery (Dr. J. Dunne, Plenty Road, Preston) as he had been poorly through the day. Unfortunately he suffered a coronary occlusion and died in the doctor's surgery.

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